Patty in the City

CAROLYN WELLS

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BY

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TWO LITTLE WOMEN SERIES,
THE MARJORIE SERIES, ETC.

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To
Dorothy Esterbrook

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	PLANS	1
II	A LAST MEETING	13
III	A NEW HOME	25
IV	LORRAINE	37
V	A NEW SCHOOL	49
VI	THE REASON WHY	61
VII	SOME NEW FRIENDS	73
VIII	A TEA-PARTY	85
IX	HILDA	97
X	GRIGS	109
XI	EXPERIENCES	121
XII	A VISIT TO THE HOSPITAL	133
XIII	ELISE	144
XIV	THE CASINO	156
XV	A PLEASANT SATURDAY	168
XVI	A CAPABLE COOK	180
XVII	LORRAINE'S ENDEAVOR	192
XVIII	THE CIRCUS PARTY	204
XIX	THEMES	216
XX	TWO CONFIDENTIAL INTERVIEWS	228
XXI	THE CINDERELLA PARTY	241
XXII	"IT"	252
XXIII	CHRISTMAS	263

Patty in the City

CHAPTER I

PLANS

IT was the third week in September when the Fairfields left the seashore and returned to their Vernondale home.

"Now, my child," said Mr. Fairfield, as they sat on the veranda after dinner, "I will unfold to you my plans for the coming winter, and you may accept, or reject, or amend them as you please."

"Proceed," said Patty, settling herself comfortably in her wicker chair; "I feel in an amiable mood this evening, and will probably agree to anything you may suggest."

"I've been thinking for some time," went on her father, "that I don't want to spend the coming winter in Vernondale. I would much rather be in New York."

"Reason number one—Nan," said Patty, checking it off on her forefinger and smiling at her father.

"Yes," he responded, with an answering smile, "she is reason number one, but there are others."

To readers who are unfamiliar with Patty's earlier history we may say right here that her mother had died when Patty was but three years old. At present she lived with her father in their little home in Vernondale, an establishment of which Patty greatly prided herself on her management.

Recently Mr. Fairfield had become engaged to Miss Nan Allen, a young lady who lived in Philadelphia, and who was a dear friend of Patty's.

"You know," Mr. Fairfield went on, "this Vernondale house was only an experiment, and although it has proved successful in its own way, I want to try another experiment of a winter in the city. As you so wisely discern, it is partly for the sake of being nearer to Nan. The Allens will spend part of the winter in New York, and, too, Philadelphia is more easily accessible from there than from here. We shall not be married until spring, and so your absolute monarchy will extend through the winter, and you can then abdicate in favor of the new queen."

"And I'll be glad enough to do it," cried Patty; "it isn't abdication at all; or if it is, I'm glad of it. I'm perfectly delighted that you're going to marry Nan, and though it does seem ridiculous to have one of my own friends for a stepmother, yet she's six years older than I am, and if she wants to rule me with a rod of iron, she may."

"I fancy there won't be much stepmothering about it; I'm afraid you'll be two refractory children, and I'll have to take care of you both."

"I don't know about that," said Patty, laughing. "You've become so absurdly young yourself of late that I think I shall have to take care of you two. But tell me some more about your New York plans. Shall we have a house of our own?"

"No; I think not—this winter. Although you are all that is admirable by way of a housekeeper, I've come to the conclusion that it's too much responsibility for you; and of course, would be much more so in the city. So I think we'll take a suite of rooms in some nice apartment hotel. This, you see, will make it more convenient for me in regard to my business; for I'm quite ready to confess that I'm tired of

enjoying a commuter's privileges. From our city home I could probably reach my office in less than half an hour, while from here it takes me fully an hour and a half, besides the discomforts of the railroad and ferry trip."

"That would be nice," said Patty thoughtfully; "then we wouldn't have to have breakfast so early, and I wouldn't have to wait for you so long at night."

"Another thing," went on her father, "is your own education. I want you to have a year or two at some good school in the city, and I do not want you to go back and forth every day from here. And you ought to take singing lessons, and there are lots of things you ought to learn. During your rather migratory life of the past two years your education has really been neglected, and it won't do. You're growing up, to be sure, but you're still a schoolgirl, and must remain one for a couple of years more at least. When we take Nan into the family she can look after the housekeeping, and so you will be free to attend to your studies; but this winter, as I say, you must not have household cares to interfere. And so a few rooms in some nice hotel will make a home for us that shall be cosey and pleasant, and yet not fill

your life with the cares and duties of housekeeping."

"All right, papa," said Patty, "I think it will be lovely, and I'm ready to go, right straight off. Of course I'm sorry to leave the Vernondale girls, and they'll be as mad as hops at me for going; but I do love the city, and I think we'll have a beautiful time. When shall we start?"

"Not to-night," said Mr. Fairfield, smiling at his impetuous daughter; "there are some trifling details to be settled first. You see, you're a country girl, my child, and deplorably ignorant of city ways. Has it occurred to you that it would hardly do for you and me to live alone in a city hotel? For I must necessarily be down at my office all day, and, too, I shall probably make occasional trips to Philadelphia. At such times you would be alone in our apartment, which is, of course, out of the question. Have you anything to suggest?"

"I never thought of that. I thought we could live together there just the same as we do here. You're always away all day."

"Yes, but here there are the three servants to look after you. And, too, conventions are

not quite the same in New York and Vernondale. I don't want a governess for you, for I want you to have the experiences of school life."

"I might have a maid," said Patty, anxious to suggest something. "I might take Pansy."

"No," said her father, "that isn't the kind of person you require. The third person in our home must be a lady who can look after you and advise you, and occasionally go about with you."

"Well then, marry Nan right away, and let her do all this."

"That would do admirably, but there is one obstacle. I laid that plan before Nan herself, and she positively refused to come and be one of us before next spring."

"Well, what *can* we do?" asked Patty.

"Why, I think this the solution of the problem: Let us take Grandma Elliott to spend the winter with us."

"Just the thing!" exclaimed Patty, clapping her hands; "she's the very one! she loves to live in the city and she's lived there so much she knows all about it, and I'm sure she'd be glad to go."

"Yes, she would be just the right one; she's

a very wise lady, and although she's perhaps sixty years old, she is as active and energetic as many much younger women. She is quite conversant with the proprieties, and would know even better than I just what you can and can't do. For you must know, Patty girl, that your life in New York will be more restricted in many ways than it is here. There are certain rules that must be observed, and while I want you to have a good time and a happy time, yet you must realise that you are still only a schoolgirl, and must conduct yourself as such."

"Can't I go to anything except school, papa?" asked Patty, looking a little dismayed.

"Well, perhaps on nice afternoons I might take you for a walk around the block," said her father, laughing at her anxious face. "But suppose we go over and see what Grandma Elliott has to say about it."

"All right," said Patty, "but you must protect me from Marian's ferocity. She'll be as mad as a raging lion."

When the question of the Fairfields' permanent residence was under discussion a year earlier, Grandma Elliott was perhaps the only one in favour of their living in New York. The

younger Mrs. Elliott, who was Mr. Fairfield's sister, had most decidedly been of the opinion that a home in the small town of Vernondale was in every way better adapted to Patty's welfare.

Patty's cousins had vociferously agreed to this, and the result was that Mr. Fairfield had taken a house in Vernondale for a year. Patty had proved a most satisfactory little housekeeper, for she had a real talent for household management, but even Aunt Alice had at last come to agree with Mr. Fairfield that the responsibilities were rather heavy for a schoolgirl.

As Patty had anticipated, the Elliott children, and especially Marian, received the news with expressions of emphatic disapproval.

"I *knew* you'd do it!" wailed Marian, "but I think it's perfectly horrid, and I'll never forgive you as long as I live! I don't *want* you to go away from Vernondale, and you won't like it a bit in New York, I know you won't. You can't do anything at all; you can't go out into the street without a *chaperon,* and a maid, and two policemen! And whatever will the Tea Club do without you?"

"I'll have all the Tea Club come in to a meet-

ing at my house," said Patty, anxious to pacify her cousin.

"We won't come! we'll none of us ever speak to you again! we'll cross your name off the books and forget that you ever existed!"

It was so seldom that the gentle Marian became excited over anything that Patty felt really sorry, and tried her best to put the matter in its most attractive light.

"Don't talk like that, Marian," she said; "papa has decided that we are to go, and so there's no use in discussing that part of it. Now the thing to do is to find the bright side and look on that."

This was Patty Fairfield's philosophy in a nutshell. All her life she had not only unquestioningly accepted the inevitable, but had immediately found its bright side and ignored all others. This was partly the cause and partly the effect of her bright sunshiny disposition and her uniformly happy and contented frame of mind.

"Just think, Marian," she went on, "you can come to see me and we can have lots of fun. We'll have all the girls come over while you're there, and it will be jolly to have a Tea Club meeting in a hotel."

"Yes, that will be fun," assented Marian, "but after the meeting we'll all have to come home and leave you there. I suppose I'm selfish, but I don't care! I don't *want* you to go away from Vernondale, Patty Fairfield, and I think you're a mean old thing to go!"

It seemed impossible to do anything with Marian in her present mood, so Patty turned to Aunt Alice for sympathy.

"I feel quite as sorry to have you go as Marian does," said Mrs. Elliott, looking lovingly at her niece, "though I don't express myself in such violent language. But Brother Fred has been talking to me and he has convinced me that it is a good plan in many ways. So I am going to give you up bravely, and I think that after a while Marian will be able to face the matter more calmly."

"I don't think it's half bad," broke in Frank Elliott; "of course we shall miss Patty like the dickens, but I shall spend much of my time visiting her in New York."

"Do," said Patty, delighted at this unlooked-for support; "come just as often as you like and I'll guarantee that you'll have a good time."

Then Mr. Fairfield proposed his plan of tak-

ing Grandma Elliott to spend the winter with them in the city.

Grandma's eyes beamed with delight as she listened, for the old lady was urban in her tastes and had lived far the greater part of her life in New York.

Aunt Alice and Uncle Charlie heartily approved of this arrangement.

"We shall miss you dreadfully," said Mr. Elliott to his mother, "but we shall let you go cheerfully, for I well know how much you will enjoy it."

But Marian set up another howl.

"It's bad enough to have Patty go," she said, "but to have Grandma go, too, is terrible. I suppose you'll take mother and little Gilbert, as well."

"Marian, you're a goose!" said Patty, laughing. "If you don't stop talking like that, I'll take *you* along and keep you there all winter."

"I don't want to do that," said Marian, "but I don't want you to go either. I know one thing, though—after you've been there a week you'll be so disgusted you'll come trailing back again."

"And after you've visited me for a week you'll be so enchanted that you won't want to

come trailing back," said Patty, laughing at her cousin's woe-begone expression.

"When are you going?" asked Marian in a tone of final resignation.

"Very soon," said Mr. Fairfield, "for I want to get this ignorant daughter of mine into school as quickly as possible. Indeed, we shall go as soon as Grandma Elliott is ready to accompany us."

"You won't have to wait long for me," said Grandma; "I shall be all ready by the time you have found your house."

CHAPTER II

A LAST MEETING

PATTY and her father looked at several apartments before they found one which seemed satisfactory in every way. It was necessary that it should be near the school Patty was to attend, and also conveniently located with a view to Mr. Fairfield's daily trips downtown.

Besides this, Mr. Fairfield was particular about the atmosphere of the hotel. Some they looked into seemed to Patty like gorgeous glittering palaces, with decorations so rich and ornate as to be almost barbaric. These Mr. Fairfield came out of as rapidly as he went in, and more than once Patty cast a longing backward glance at the marble floors and gilded frescoes which her father seemed to scorn. On the other hand, Mr. Fairfield was equally ill-pleased with a house which was unattractive in appearance, or whose furnishings were not tasteful.

Patty almost began to think that her father was too fastidious, and would never be able to find a place that would exactly suit him.

However, the moment they stepped inside of a certain apartment hotel named The Wilberforce, Mr. Fairfield's face showed an expression of satisfaction, which immediately convinced Patty that they had struck the right trail at last.

And so it proved, for after looking into several suites of rooms then vacant, Mr. Fairfield told Patty that if she could feel contented to take up her abode there, he thought he could.

Patty willingly agreed, for she, too, liked The Wilberforce from the first.

The hotel faced Central Park, and though not among the largest in the city, it was more attractively planned than any of the others they had looked at.

The apartment they liked best was a corner one with windows looking toward the east and south. The large corner room had a beautiful bay window, and was so light and sunny that Patty declared it should be their library.

"Library, sitting-room and general living-room," said her father, laughing; "you know, Puss, you can't have as many rooms at your disposal in the city as you have in Vernondale.

But we'll have all our books and favourite belongings in this room, and I'm sure we can make it very comfortable. Then this smaller room next will be a more formal reception room for casual callers."

There were four bedrooms, and Mr. Fairfield insisted that the two sunniest and pleasantest ones should be assigned to Patty and Grandma Elliott. The other two, whose windows opened on an airshaft instead of on the street, were to be Mr. Fairfield's bedroom and a guest-room.

The whole apartment was very prettily furnished in good taste, and entirely without that lavish use of bright colours which so often characterises a hotel.

The library was in green and the little reception-room in pale blue.

Patty's own room was daintily done up in pink, and though perhaps not just the colour she would have chosen, it was so fresh and pretty that she expressed herself perfectly satisfied.

Of course, everything in the way of chairs and tables was amply provided, but the Fairfields proposed to bring in a quantity of their own furniture, rugs, pictures and books.

Having decided on the apartment, Mr. Fairfield drew a plan of it so that when they returned home they might better decide what pieces of furniture could be accommodated.

Patty flew around from room to room in great delight.

"I'm so used to changing my home," she said, "that I really feel quite at home in this apartment already. This library is going to be the loveliest room in the world. You can have your desk there, and I can have my little desk here, and we'll have our big library table in the middle, just as it is at home. Then we'll have Grandma's little work-table by this window. This big fireplace is perfectly fascinating and we can bring our brass andirons and fireset. They're a lot prettier than these old black iron things. And we can bring a book-case or two, can't we, papa?"

"You can bring whatever you like, Chicken; but I wouldn't advise carting in many of those heavy things at first, until we're sure we like the place well enough to stay all winter. It certainly looks attractive, and it has been highly recommended to me, but after all it may prove to have serious disadvantages. So at first we'll just bring our desks, and some books and pic-

tures, and a few little trinkets to prettify the rooms, and then later on, if we like it, we can run back to Vernondale for a few more things."

"Yes, that is best, papa," said Patty; "you always do know what is best. And now how soon do you suppose we can come in to stay?"

"I think we'll move next Saturday. I can take a whole holiday that day, and get you and Grandma safely established here."

So eager was Patty to select and pack up the things she wanted to take to the city that she could scarcely wait to get back to Vernondale. It had been a tiresome day, but as soon as she reached home she quite forgot her fatigue in the fun of making her selections. Her favourite pictures were taken from the walls and stood in the hall ready to be packed. All of her tea-things, a small selection of bric-a-bric, and a large box of books were added. Then Patty packed her own trunk and her father's. Mr. Fairfield looked after the heavier matters, such as rugs and chairs and the two desks and Grandma's little work-table.

Altogether, it seemed like a regular moving, and Marian, who came over in the midst of the

excitement, sat down on the box of books and burst into tears.

"Marian," said Patty, almost crying herself, "if you don't stop acting like that I don't know what I shall do. I'm rapidly growing homesicker and homesicker, and now if you commence to weep all over the place I shall just go to pieces entirely."

"But you *want* to go away," wailed Marian, between her sobs, "you just *want* to go, and that's the worst of it! If you *did* cry you'd be nothing but an old hypocrite!"

"I do want to go, but I'm sorry to leave Vernondale, too. Don't you suppose I'm fond of all you girls? Don't you suppose I'll miss you like sixty? And don't you suppose it's a heap worse for me to go away from you all than it is for you to have me go? Why, there's lots of you to cheer each other up, and there's only one of me. But what's the use of acting like this, anyway? I've got to go, and I might as well go laughing as crying. If *your* father wanted you to go, you'd go, and *I* wouldn't do all I could to make it harder for you by crying from morning to night."

The logic of these remarks seemed to impress Marian, for she stopped crying, and said: "I

suppose I am a horrid old thing to act so, and I am going to stop, at least until after you're gone, and then I'm going to cry all I want to."

"Do," said Patty, "have a real good time and cry all day, and every day, if you like. But now come on and help me pack my photographs."

Marian was as good as her word. She cried no more, and though her demeanour was not exactly hilarious, she ceased wearing a reproachful air, and went around helping Patty with a loving good-will.

The last few days before their departure Patty and Mr. Fairfield spent at the Elliotts' home.

The trunks and boxes had all been sent away, and Boxley Hall was shut up and securely barred and fastened.

The servants had found other situations. Mancy was going to live at Miss Daggett's, though the good-natured coloured woman was not all sure of her ability to stay with that sharp-tongued lady.

Pansy was to live with the Elliotts, and Mr. Fairfield had promised her that if under his sister's tuition she became a competent waitress she should come the next year to live in the city

house of the new Mrs. Fairfield. Pansy was delighted at this prospect, for she had become devotedly attached to the Fairfields, and, moreover, was a great admirer of the lovely Miss Allen.

The day before Patty was to leave Vernondale the Tea Club had a farewell meeting at Marian's.

"You know, Patty," said Elsie Morris, "that you'll still have to be president of the Club. We utterly refuse to let anyone else have that position."

"But that's perfectly silly," protested Patty; "it would be much more sensible for me to be an honourable or honorary ex-president, and you put in somebody else to rule the Club this winter."

"Pooh," said Ethel Holmes, "don't flatter yourself you ruled this Club!"

"No," said Patty, laughing, "or if I did rule them, they overruled me. You're a fractious lot, and it's far from being an easy task to be your president. However, as I want you to have somebody to keep you straight during my absence, I'm going to propose my cousin Marian for the office of president."

This proposal was most favourably received,

and Marian was unanimously elected president of the Tea Club, until such time as Patty should return to Vernondale. For the girls, one and all, refused to admit that Patty was going away permanently. They chose to assume that she was merely going to New York for the winter, and implicitly believed that the summer months would see her again established at Boxley Hall.

"And very likely we *shall* return," said Patty. "Nobody can foretell what my father is going to do, and nobody can stop him when he once decides what he *is* going to do. I certainly never dreamed he was going to marry Nan, until he told me so himself."

"Aren't you glad about it?" asked Helen Preston.

"Yes, indeed," exclaimed Patty; "I'm as happy as can be about it. I just love Nan, and it will be just like having a sister. I wish they'd get married right away, only then I suppose we wouldn't have Grandma Elliott with us this winter, and I'd be sorry about that. Now remember, girls, just as soon as we get settled at The Wilberforce you're all to come in some Saturday. Papa says not to come for tea, because it makes you so late getting home, but

to come for luncheon, and he'll take us all to the matinee afterward."

There was a general chorus of glee at this, for the girls were well acquainted with the kind and genial Mr. Fairfield, and his invitation meant a delightful treat.

"I do think you father is lovely," said Polly Stevens, "and I think you're going to have beautiful times in the city this winter. I really quite envy you."

"But I wish you weren't going," said Christine Converse; "I don't see how the Tea Club can get along at all without you."

"But I shall often come out to the Tea Club meetings," said Patty; "of course I shall often come out to Marian's to stay a day or two, and if I'm here on Saturday I can come to the Club, and whenever you have an evening entertainment I'll come out for that."

"I hadn't thought of that," said Marian, brightening a little; "and you can come out to our house for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and New Year's Day, and all the holidays, can't you?"

"Yes," said Patty, smiling; "except the ones you come in to spend with me."

As this brighter outlook had greatly decreased

Marian's aspect of hopeless gloom, the girls all began to wax more merry, and soon they were all joking and laughing in true Tea-club style.

Each one had brought a parting gift for Patty and the presentations were made with jesting speeches.

Elsie Morris brought a well-filled court-plaster case, for, as she explained, Patty was sure to be knocked down and run over every day by automobiles and trolley cars, and the healing strips would prove beneficial.

Laura Russell brought her a tiny fern growing in a flower pot, in order that she might have some green thing to remind her of the country.

"Oho," said Ethel Holmes, "I'm going to give you a dozen green things to remind you of the country," and Ethel produced her gift, which was nothing more nor less than a humorous sketch of the twelve girls of the Tea Club. Ethel was clever at drawing, and the group was well caricatured. Instead of drawing the faces, she had pasted in tiny photographs of the girls' features, and, moreover, had realistically bedecked their hats with tiny feathers and microscopic bows of real ribbon. Neckties and hair-ribbons were also pasted into

place, until the whole affair was a most comical representation of the Club members.

Patty was delighted and declared she would have this work of art framed and conspicuously hung in her new home.

CHAPTER III

A NEW HOME

ON Saturday morning the Fairfields and Grandma Elliott started for their New York home. Uncle Charlie went to town on the same train, and the rest of the Elliott family escorted the party to the station.

Marian had determined not to cry when Patty went away, but it required such a desperate effort to carry out her resolution that she made a most pathetic picture.

"Chirk up, sis," said Frank; "the world isn't coming to an end. I'll be a Patty to you."

"And a Grandmother, too?" asked Marian, smiling in spite of herself.

"Yes, and an Uncle Fred. I'll be a whole family tree to you if you'll only smile a little, and brace up. You look like a dying rubber plant."

Marian did brighten up a little, and as the train rolled out of the station the last Patty saw of her cousin was a positive, if not very merry, smile of farewell.

Following the process of thought usual to those starting off on a journey, Patty spent the first half of the trip to New York thinking about those she had left behind; thinking of her pleasant Vernondale home, her dear relatives, and the merry crowd of Tea Club girls. At first it seemed to her that no new scenes or new friends could ever make up for those she was leaving. But as she neared Jersey City and as she crossed the long ferry her thoughts turned forward to her new home in New York, and her anticipations began to seem bright and happy.

Uncle Charlie parted from them at the ferry, and soon Patty and her large family, as she called it since the addition of Grandma Elliott, were in a cab driving uptown to The Wilberforce.

Grandma Elliott was perhaps the most enthusiastic member of the party. That good lady was very fond of New York city, and had the effect of a patriot returning home after an enforced absence.

When at last she was ushered into the pretty apartment at The Wilberforce, she was more delighted than ever.

"My dear Fred," she exclaimed, "what

beautiful rooms! So bright and sunny, and such a delightful outlook across the park. I'm sure we shall be very happy here."

The rooms did look very attractive. The furniture sent from Vernondale had been unpacked and put in place, and now it only remained for Patty to arrange the smaller trifles that were to make the place distinctively homelike.

To Patty's surprise they found awaiting them a large box of chrysanthemums addressed to Grandma, and a smaller box of carnations for Patty. These had been sent as a greeting of welcome from Mr. Hepworth.

"How kind it was of him to send them," said Patty, as she arranged the flowers in tall glass vases; "we'll keep these beautiful chrysanthemums in the library and put the pink carnations in the reception-room. Now, I'll put these brass candlesticks on the mantel—and, papa, I wish you'd wind that fussy French clock of yours, for I don't dare touch it."

"Indeed, you'd better not touch it, Miss Harum-scarum; that clock insists on being treated with the utmost deference and respect. I'm afraid you'd smash it at the first winding."

"I dare say I should; I never can make a

clock go. Now, Grandma, can't I help you with your unpacking?"

The three worked with right good-will, and by noon nearly everything was in place. This was fortunate, for just as Patty flung herself down in an easy chair to rest, and to survey the results of her labours, callers were announced.

These were Aunt Isabel St. Clair and Ethelyn.

"For goodness' sake!" exclaimed Patty, in dismay, "I don't want to see them—at least not just now."

"You can't very well help seeing them," said Grandma, "so you may as well look pleasant about it. You may show them up," she added to the servant who had brought the cards.

In a few moments Aunt Isabel and Ethelyn came bustling in.

"How do you do?" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair; "how perfectly lovely to have you here in town. And how delightful, Mrs. Elliott, that you can be here to take care of our Patricia."

Patty smiled at the name which no one ever called her except the St. Clair family, and Aunt Isabel chattered on.

"You're looking well, Fred, and what lovely

rooms you have; I shall spend a great deal of my time here, I'm sure. I shall always drop in to luncheon when I'm in town for the day shopping."

"So shall I," said Ethelyn, "and I'm coming to stay a week at a time, mayn't I, Patty?"

"I'm not sure about that," said Mr. Fairfield, smiling kindly, "for you see Patty is going to be very busy this winter. She's going to school, and I want her to study hard; and she is to take music lessons, so that really she will have little time to play."

"Oh, are you going to school?" said Ethelyn, in a disappointed tone; "I'm not going any more. Mamma wanted me to, but I said I wouldn't. I'm coming out this winter, and I'm going to have smashing good times. Don't go to school, Patricia."

"Patty hasn't anything to say about it," said Patty's father, smiling at his daughter.

"I want to go, anyway," said Patty; "I want to learn things, and, besides, I think sixteen is too young for a girl to come out."

"Much too young," said Grandma Elliott, decidedly; "Patty is in my charge this winter, and she is to be a schoolgirl and not a young lady in society."

Aunt Isabel sniffed a little, and looked at Mrs. Elliott through her *lorgnon*. But the elder lady bore the scrutiny calmly, and only said, "I hope Patty will be happy in spite of my restrictions."

"Oh, of course she will; and I dare say you are quite right," said Mrs. St. Clair, quickly, for she had no wish to offend Mrs. Elliott. "What school are you going to, my dear child?"

"I selected her school," said Mr. Fairfield, "and I decided that the Oliphant school would be best for her."

"And a wise choice, too," said Aunt Isabel; "that's where I wanted Ethelyn to go this year. The best people in New York patronise it."

"But they're awfully strict there," said Ethelyn; "they make you study every minute. The lessons are awful hard, and the rules are something terrible."

Patty began to look a little serious at this prospect, but Mr. Fairfield said: "School management that isn't strict is no management at all; but if Patty gives this school a fair trial and finds she doesn't like it, we'll try to find one that suits her better."

Mr. Fairfield invited the guests to stay to luncheon and they willingly accepted.

Patty was a little disappointed, for though fond of her aunt and cousin in some ways, she would have preferred not to have them there the first day.

The St. Clairs were very assertive people and seemed to pervade the whole place. They fluttered about from room to room, examining everything, and freely offering advice and criticism.

"I will help you select some new clothes, Patricia," said her aunt; "for I'm sure what you had in Vernondale will not be suitable for the city."

Grandma Elliott looked dismayed. She was of such a gentle, refined nature that she could not quite bring herself to refuse Mrs. St. Clair's offer, and yet as she glanced at the overdressed Ethelyn she was very sure that she did not wish Patty similarly attired.

But Mr. Fairfield came to her rescue. "Thank you, Isabel," he said; "but you see I'm still trying experiments with my daughter. And this winter I have put her entirely in charge of Mrs. Elliott in every particular—even including her millinery goods. But come,

let us all go down to luncheon, and we shall be greatly indebted to you if you will assist us in ordering that."

As Patty sometimes expressed it, her father had a happy faculty for offending people without their knowing it; and he had changed the subject so deftly that Mrs. St. Clair scarcely realised that her offer had been refused.

As they went down in the elevator, and passed through many beautiful rooms on their way to the dining-room, Ethelyn grew enthusiastic with delight.

"Oh," she whispered, as she squeezed Patty's arm, "it must be just gorgeous to live here! Such beautiful rooms, and such grand-looking people, and servants all about. I should think you would always want to sit in these parlours."

"I don't," said Patty, laughing; "I wouldn't know what to do sitting up here in state. I think our own rooms much more pleasant and home-like."

The dining-room, too, excited Ethelyn's admiration. The soft thick carpets, and daintily laid tables, each with its vase of flowers, seemed suddenly to her far more desirable than the well-appointed dining-room in her own home at Villa Rosa.

Ethelyn was of an envious disposition, and though she was indulged and petted by her parents, she always wanted the belongings of someone else. She determined right then and there to coax her father to close up Villa Rosa and come to New York for the winter, though she had little hope that he would do so.

Whatever might be Aunt Isabel's taste in buying clothes, she certainly knew very well how to order a luncheon, and as Mr. Fairfield put the matter entirely in her hands, a most satisfactory repast was the result.

Patty enjoyed it all immensely, and as she looked around at the pleasant-faced people at the other tables she came to the conclusion that it was all very attractive, and that her home would be very happy.

She was glad that Aunt Isabel and Ethelyn were only temporary guests, for Patty could not help noticing that Mrs. St. Clair, though polite and correct, did not act quite like Grandma Elliott.

The elder lady, though equally sophisticated, had an air of reserve and gentle dignity which seemed to Patty far more charming than Aunt Isabel's haughty self-assurance. Though Patty herself was inexperienced, she knew by instinct

that Aunt Isabel laughed just a little too loudly, and expressed her opinions just a little too frankly, for a public dining-room.

But Mrs. St. Clair had been very kind to Patty during her visit the previous year, and, too, she had, as Patty was well aware, some very lovable traits. So Patty's sense of justice asserted itself, and she reproached herself for having criticised her aunt unkindly, even in thought.

As the St. Clairs were going to a matinee, they left immediately after luncheon, and Patty drew a little sigh of relief after their departure.

"I like Aunt Isabel least of any of my aunts, papa," she said.

"I don't blame you much, my child; Isabel is kind-hearted, but she is a worldly woman, and exceedingly superficial. Your Aunt Alice is worth a dozen of her."

"Yes," said Patty, "and Aunt Grace is worth half-a-dozen, and Aunt Hester is worth three or four, anyway."

"But she is your aunt, Patty," said Grandma Elliott, gently; "you must remember that, and consequently you owe her respect and deference."

"All right, Grandma; I'll pay her all the

respect and deference she wants; but I do hate to have her bothering around when we want to get settled to our housekeeping. But now they've gone, and I can have a good long afternoon to straighten things out."

"All right, Puss," said her father, "and I'm going out now, on some errands, and if you tuck Grandma away for a little nap, which I'm quite sure she needs, you can have an uninterrupted hour all to yourself."

"Beautiful!" cried Patty; "then I can fix all my books just as I want them, and arrange my tea table and bureau-drawers and everything. And you'll bring me home a box of candy, won't you, so we can have a lovely cosey time this evening?"

"In the bright lexicon of your youth, a cosey time seems to mean a box of candy and a new book."

"Yes," said Patty; "I'm sure I don't know anything cosier. Now run along, and come back early, and don't forget the candy."

A little fatigued with the unusual exertions of the day, Mrs. Elliott went to her room for her nap, and Patty prepared to enjoy herself in her own way. She was tidy by nature, and really enjoyed what she called straightening

out. Deciding upon the best places for her belongings, and then arranging them in those places, proved an absorbing occupation, and she spent the whole afternoon thus happily at work.

CHAPTER IV

LORRAINE

LATER in the afternoon Kenneth Harper called.

Patty and Grandma Elliott were both glad to see the boy, for though a student at Columbia College, he had visited much at Vernondale, and they were both well acquainted with him.

"It's awfully jolly, your being in town this winter, Patty," he said, "and I expect I'll bother you to death running down to see you. If I come too often, Mrs. Elliott, you must just put me out without any ceremony."

"I'll remember that," said Grandma, smiling, "and if you appear more than once a week, I shall give you a gentle hint."

"A hint will be sufficient, ma'am; I'm not like the man who hung around until they kicked him downstairs. He thought a while and then the situation dawned upon him; 'I know what they meant,' he said; 'they meant they didn't

want me up there!' Now I'm not like that; I can catch on much more quickly."

Patty and Grandma laughed heartily at Kenneth's funny story, and then the boy unwrapped a parcel which he had brought.

"You see," he said, "I felt sure you people would want to do a little light farming, so I brought you a plantation."

As he spoke he removed the papers from a pretty window-box, which was filled with several small plants.

"Oh, how nice!" cried Patty, clapping her hands; "I just wanted something to take care of. You see I can't have a dog or a cat or any kind of an animal here, but I can have plants. One of the girls gave me a little fern, but I think it is going to die. It's drooping like a weeping-willow now."

"I rather think these will die soon," said Kenneth, cheerfully, "but it doesn't matter; when they do, you can get some more to put in—of a different kind. It's nice to have a variety."

"I think they look very thrifty," said Grandma, "and I'm sure with good care they'll do nicely."

"Perhaps they will, ma'am; that one in the

end is an orange tree. It may have oranges on by Christmas."

"Yes, if anybody ties them on," said Patty, laughing.

With Kenneth's help they arranged the box in the bay-window, and Patty named it "Ten-Acre Farm." "For," she said, "although it doesn't really measure quite ten acres, I like a large-sounding name; it gives you such a feeling of roominess."

"And that's a great thing in New York," said Kenneth; "somehow I always feel cramped. My room is too small, there's never any room in the street cars, and even the sidewalks are crowded."

"Well, you may come down and roam around my farm whenever you like," said Patty; "and now, don't you think it would be nice, Grandma, if we made a cup of tea? Just to see how the tea-things work, you know."

Grandma thought it would be a very nice plan, and she rang for hot water, while Patty hunted up the tea-caddy, and Kenneth filled the alcohol lamp.

And so, when Mr. Fairfield returned with the promised box of candy, he found a merry tea-party of three awaiting him.

"How do you do, Kenneth, my boy!" he said, cordially grasping young Harper's hand.

"I'm very well, Mr. Fairfield, and delighted to welcome you and yours as fellow-citizens of our village. The last time I saw you, we were all down at the seashore; do you remember?"

"Yes, and a jolly time we had down there; we must go again next summer. Won't you stay and dine with us, Kenneth?"

"No, thank you, sir; I can't to-night, much as I should like to. I must go home and dig up Greek roots all the evening."

"You have a farm, too, then?" said Grandma, smiling.

"Yes, and one that's rather hard to till. But I suppose, Patty, you'll be grubbing away at lessons next week."

"Yes," said Patty, "and I believe I'm not to lift my eyes from my book from Monday morning till Friday night."

"But Saturdays?" said Kenneth.

"Saturday afternoons, if we are at home, we'll always be glad to see you," said Grandma.

"Thank you, ma'am; I'll often run down, and take my chances on finding you in."

"I like that young chap," said Mr. Fairfield, after Kenneth had gone; "and he seems so alone here in the city. I think we might be a little kind to him, Grandma."

"I think so, too," agreed Mrs. Elliott, cordially; "he's a thoroughly nice boy, and I've always liked him."

"He *is* a nice boy," said Patty, "and how much he looks like his aunt. He always makes me think of Miss Daggett."

The elders laughed at this, for Miss Daggett, who had been the Fairfields' next-door neighbour at Vernondale, was an elderly, erratic, unamiable spinster, and her nephew was a frank young fellow, as good-natured as he was good-looking.

When dinner-time came Grandma told Patty that she might wear her white cashmere dress and white hair-ribbons.

This pleased Patty very much, for it was one of her favourite frocks, and she always enjoyed wearing it. Though not over-fond of dress, Patty had a great liking for pretty things, and was also very sensitive to pleasant sights and sounds.

So the dinner-hour delighted her, for the dining-room was gaily lighted and decorated,

and musicians in a palm-screened balcony played soft music.

Patty took her place at their table, and, being of an adaptable nature, remarked that she felt already quite at home there.

"I don't know," said Mr. Fairfield; "it's a little more like a hotel than I had anticipated. Still, if we feel that we're surrounded by too many of our fellow-beings, we can have a private dining-room."

"Oh, no, don't do that," said Patty; "I like it better this way."

"I like it, too," said Grandma Elliott; "don't make a change yet, Fred; let us try it for a while, at least."

"Very well," said Mr. Fairfield, "just as you ladies say. And, Grandma, I think that lady at the next table must know you. She's smiling at you most amiably."

Mrs. Elliott looked in the direction indicated.

"Why, she certainly does know me," she said, bowing cordially to the lady in question. "That is Mrs. Hamilton. She's the daughter of my old friend, Ellen Howard. And that's her daughter sitting next her. If they're living here, Patty, you will probably find Lorraine Hamilton a pleasant companion."

"Lorraine," said Patty; "what a pretty name. And she looks like a nice girl, too."

After dinner our party found Mrs. Hamilton and her daughter in the parlour, and paused to talk to them there.

Mrs. Hamilton was glad to see Mrs. Elliott, who had been such a dear friend of her mother's, and while they talked to each other the two girls sat down on a near-by sofa to become acquainted.

Lorraine Hamilton was a girl of about Patty's own age, but while Patty was rosy and healthy-looking, Lorraine was pale and delicate. She was very graceful and pretty, with dark hair and large dark eyes. But she seemed listless and indifferent, and Patty, who enjoyed everything enthusiastically, wondered what could be the matter with her.

"Are you well?" Patty asked her, bluntly. One of Patty's greatest faults was her abrupt manner of questioning people. She did not mean to be rude, but she was by nature so frank and straightforward that she often spoke in that way without realising it.

"Yes," said Lorraine, looking a little surprised, "I'm well, but I'm never very strong."

"I don't believe you take exercise enough,"

said Patty, still bluntly; "you don't look as if you did."

"I don't take any," said Lorraine, candidly, "that is, not if I can help it. I walk to school and back every day, but that's only three blocks each way, and I never go out anywhere else."

"But why not?" asked Patty, in amazement.

"Because I don't want to. I hate to go out of doors; I like to sit in the house all the time, and read or write."

"I like to read, too. But I like to run out of doors or walk or ride or play tennis or skate or anything like that."

"I don't," said Lorraine, shortly.

She spoke so curtly that Patty suddenly realised that perhaps she hadn't been very polite herself, and as she saw that Grandma Elliott and Mrs. Hamilton were still deeply absorbed in their conversation, she felt that she ought to try once more to entertain this queer girl.

"What do you like to read?" she asked, by way of starting a subject.

"Poetry," said Lorraine, "all kinds of poetry. I'm going to be a poet myself."

"Oh, are you?" said Patty, a little awed by this confident announcement.

"Yes, I've sent some poems to the magazines already."

"Have they been printed yet?"

"No, they weren't even accepted. But that doesn't discourage me; poets never succeed at first."

"No, I suppose not." Patty wished to be agreeably encouraging, but she knew very little about the experiences of young poets.

"Do you live in The Wilberforce?" she asked, thinking it better to get away from the subject of poetry.

"Yes," said Lorraine; "we're on the third floor."

"Why, so are we; how very nice. Will you come and see us?"

"Yes, indeed," said Lorraine; "I'd like to ever so much. We're very lonely; my father is in the Navy, and is away on a three years' cruise. So mother and I are all alone."

"I'm glad you're here; Grandma and your mother can be company for each other, and I'm sure you and I will be friends. Where do you go to school?"

"To the Oliphant."

"Why, that's where I'm going; I start on Monday."

"That's nice; we can go together." For the first time Lorraine seemed to show some interest and animation, and Patty felt encouraged to believe that there might be some fun in this queer girl after all.

"Tell me about the school," she said.

"Well," said Lorraine, "it's quite a big school, with lots of pupils and about a dozen teachers. Miss Oliphant is the principal, and she's very stern and strict. Miss Fenton is very kind, and she isn't a bit stern. In fact, she is very-going; you can just wind her around your finger. Then the French teacher is rather nice, and Miss Rand, the English teacher, is lovely."

"Tell me about the girls," said Patty.

"Oh, there are all sorts; there are the grubbing girls that just study and dig all the time, and the silly girls, who never study at all. Then there is a set of snobbish girls, who stick up their noses at anybody who isn't a millionaire."

"The girls don't sound very nice, as you describe them," said Patty.

"No, they're not very nice; I don't know a girl I really like in the whole school."

"That sounds cheerful," said Patty, laughing; "I think I'll enjoy a school made up of

girls like that. Do you suppose they'll like me?"

"I don't know," said Lorraine, looking uninterested; "they don't like me."

Patty felt like saying, "I shouldn't think they would," but she politely refrained, and just then the elder ladies called them to go upstairs.

"Well," said Patty, as she was alone with her family once more, "that Hamilton girl is the queerest thing I ever saw. She didn't have a good word to say about anybody or anything, and she doesn't seem to have a [illegible]. Such a lackadaisical, washed-out looking thing as she is! I'm sorry for her."

"Perhaps you can cheer her up, Patty girl," said her father; "you have joy and good-humour enough for two, I'm sure. Can't you give her a little?"

"It would be fun to try," said Patty, smiling at the idea; "perhaps I can transform her into a gay, jolly little flutter-budget."

They all laughed at the notion of the pale Lorraine being gay or jolly, but Patty was more in earnest than they thought, and she said: "I really am going to try, for I think it's my duty; and besides I can't stand seeing such a forlorn-looking thing around."

"Do try, Patty," said Grandma, gently, "and I hope you will succeed. You will have ample opportunity, for I have invited Mrs. Hamilton to come and see us, and to bring Lorraine."

"All right, Grandma," said Patty, cheerily, "I'll do my best."

CHAPTER V

A NEW SCHOOL

I AM so glad," said Patty, as they sat at breakfast Monday morning, "that Lorraine Hamilton goes to the Oliphant school. It's so much nicer to have somebody to go with than to go alone among a lot of strange girls."

"You'll soon get acquainted," said her father, "and you'll probably grow to love your school so much that you'll be restless and impatient during the hours you will have to spend at home."

This was a great joke, for Patty's aversion to school and lessons was well known.

"Indeed I won't," she exclaimed; "I just hate school, and always shall. Of course I want to learn things, but I'd rather sit at home and read them myself, out of books."

"It does seem too bad," said her father, "that you can't have your own way in this matter; but you just can't. Your cruel tyrant

of a parent ordains that you must go to school for a year at least; but if you study hard and learn a lot during that year, perhaps next year he'll let you stay at home."

"Well," said Patty, resignedly, "I'll go this year then, because I don't see as I can help myself; and I'll just study and cram all the time, so I won't have to go next year."

"I wish you were more studious, Patty," said Grandma.

"I wish so, too, Grandma," said Patty, "but I'm not, and never will be. So you'll have to take me just as I am, and make the best of me."

The school was only three blocks away, and Patty and Lorraine started off together. It was not a very cheerful walk, for Lorraine wore her usual air of glum despondency, and Patty felt so far from gay herself that she didn't even try to cheer up her companion.

The school term had opened a week before, but Mr. Fairfield had arranged with Miss Oliphant for Patty to go right to her classes immediately upon her arrival.

Patty had never seen the school or the teachers, and Lorraine's account of them had not sounded at all attractive.

"Let me sit by you, Lorraine, mayn't I?" Patty said, as they neared the school.

"Yes, indeed," said Lorraine; "I'll be glad to have you. Nobody ever wants to sit by me. Perhaps we can't be together in all our classes, but the opening exercises are held in the big assembly-room, and we can sit together there."

"All right," said Patty, who somehow had an unaccountable feeling of loneliness at thought of the strange school. She knew she was foolish, and she tried hard to overcome it, yet she couldn't help wishing herself back in Vernondale.

The Oliphant school was a large and handsome building, well equipped after the most modern fashion. Miss Oliphant herself received Patty, and welcomed her politely, though without cordiality. Indeed, it would have been difficult to imagine Miss Oliphant showing cordiality. She was a most dignified and important-looking personage. She held her head very high, and her cold grey eyes seemed to look right through Patty and read her very thoughts. But if Miss Oliphant did observe Patty's dejection, she certainly made no effort to allay it.

"I am glad to see you," she said, but her

formal handshake and conventional smile did not seem to corroborate her words. "You will take your place with the rest in the assembly-room, and after the opening exercises of the morning you will be assigned to your classes."

This was followed by a gesture of dismissal, but Patty paused long enough to ask: "May I sit next to Lorraine Hamilton?"

An expression of surprise passed over Miss Oliphant's face, but she only said, "Certainly, if you wish to," and then Patty rejoined Lorraine in the hall, and together they went to the assembly-room.

As it was already time for school to open, Patty had no opportunity to be introduced to any of her fellow-pupils. She looked at them, however, with a good deal of interest, and decided that notwithstanding Lorraine's opinion of them they looked like very nice girls. Two or three in particular she picked out as looking interesting, and one dark-eyed, merry-faced girl she felt sure would be especially friendly. She even smiled pleasantly at this girl, but to her surprise her smile was not cordially returned. The girl acknowledged it by a mere nod, and looked away. Patty felt a little embarrassed, and concluded that city girls

were horrid, stuck-up things, and she longed for her merry companions at the Vernondale school. Several times she found herself gazing intently at one or another of the pupils, but invariably her look was returned by a cold stare, or ignored entirely.

"I'm perfectly silly to think anything about it," thought Patty to herself; "it's just their way of not recognising anybody until they've been formally introduced. They'll be all right after I've really met them. I've never been foolishly sensitive before, and I'm not going to begin now."

So Patty bravely put out of her mind all thoughts of the girls' apparent attitude toward her, and turned her attention to her school duties. She was glad to find that in most of her studies she was in the class with Lorraine, and consequently was able to sit by her all through the morning.

The Oliphant school was attended by both boarding pupils and day pupils, and at noon a hot luncheon was served for all. After the morning lessons were over the girls gathered in groups, chatting gaily while they awaited the summons to the dining-room.

Patty supposed, of course, that at this time

Lorraine would introduce her to the girls, but she was disappointed. The two stood together alone, and Lorraine made no suggestion of joining any of the others. Neither did she exert herself to entertain Patty, but stood morose and glum, looking out of a window.

Annoyed by what she chose to consider Lorraine's rudeness, Patty determined to make her own way, and walking across the room to where the pleasant-faced girl was standing, she said:

"I'm a new pupil, and I feel very lonely; mayn't I join this group and begin to get acquainted? My name is Patty Fairfield."

"Mine is Clementine Morse," said the girl she addressed, "and this is Maude Carleton, and this is Adelaide Hart."

The girls nodded as their names were mentioned, but paid no further attention to Patty. Maude and Adelaide began to talk to each other about their own affairs, but Clementine good-naturedly opened a conversation with Patty.

"You're a day pupil, I suppose," she said; "are you a friend of Lorraine Hamilton?"

"Yes," said Patty; "she's the only girl I know here. She lives in the same hotel I do, and we came together this morning. She's in most of

my classes. You're not, are you? At least I didn't see you in the classroom this morning."

"No," said Clementine, laughing; "I'm below you in everything. I'm only one of the Gigs."

"Gigs!" exclaimed Patty; "what in the world are they?"

"Why, you see," explained Clementine, "the Oliphant school, like Gaul, is divided into three parts. The girls are all either Prigs or Digs or Gigs."

"Tell me about them," said Patty, much interested.

"Well, the Prigs are a lot of stuck-up girls who never do anything wrong. They're awfully goody-goody, and most fearfully correct in their deportment. They're on the Privileged Roll all the time. They don't study so very much, but they're great on etiquette and manners. Then the Digs are the girls who study like fury. They're like Kipling's rhinoceros: they never had any manners, then, since, or henceforward, but they're most astonishing wise and learned. You can tell them by their looks. They wear two wrinkles over their nose, and a pair of glasses. Then the Gigs are my sort. We giggle all the time, never study if we can help it, and are continually being

punished for the fun we have. Which do you think you'll be?"

"I don't know," said Patty, smiling. "I hate to study, so I don't believe I can be a Dig; I'm sure I haven't manners enough to be a Prig, and, somehow, to-day I don't feel jolly enough to be a Gig. Which is Lorraine?"

"She isn't any of them," said Clementine; "I don't believe anybody could classify her."

Just then luncheon was announced, and the girls all went to the dining-room.

Patty sat next to Lorraine, and was disappointed to see that Clementine was at another table. The dining-room was very pleasant, and the small tables were daintily appointed. Eight girls sat at each table, and though Lorraine introduced Patty to her table-mates, after a few perfunctory sentences to her they began to chat together about matters of which Patty knew nothing.

Poor Patty's spirits sank lower and lower. The girls were not actually rude to her; they merely seemed to take no interest in her, and had no wish to become better acquainted.

This was decidedly a new experience for Patty. All her life she had been liked by her companions. In Vernondale she had been the

favourite of the whole school; and even when she went to school in Boston, the girls though less enthusiastic, had all been pleasant and kind.

She couldn't understand it at all, but with her usual philosophic acceptance of the inevitable, she concluded that it was the custom of New York girls to treat strangers coolly, and she might as well get used to it.

So, assuming a cheerfulness which she was far from feeling, she addressed herself to Lorraine, and tried to keep up a conversation.

But that depressed piece of humanity was even more like a wet blanket than usual, and Patty was forced to give it up in despair.

She looked around the dining-room and couldn't help noticing that the group at each table were chatting merrily, and that nowhere else did there seem to be a stranger like herself.

After luncheon there were still fifteen or twenty minutes before class time.

Again Patty determined to do her part toward bringing about a pleasanter condition of affairs. Selecting another affable-looking girl, Patty asked Lorraine to introduce her.

"Why, that's Gertrude Lyons," said Lorraine, in astonishment.

"I don't care if it's Gertrude Bears, or Gertrude Wild Tigers," said Patty, "I want you to introduce me. Will you?"

"Certainly," said Lorraine, staring at Patty; "come on."

In a half-apologetic way Lorraine presented Patty to Gertrude Lyons, and in a wholly rude way Gertrude stared at them both.

"How do you do?" she said, coldly, to Patty. "Is this your first day here?"

"Yes," said Patty, determined to be friendly, in spite of Gertrude's repelling air; "and I think I shall like it after I get better acquainted with you all. It seems a little strange at first."

"Where do you live?" asked Gertrude, abruptly.

"At The Wilberforce, where Lorraine lives."

"How long have you lived there?"

"Only two days," said Patty, smiling, "but I'm already beginning to feel quite at home there."

"Where did you live before?"

"In Vernondale, New Jersey."

"Oh," said Gertrude, and then, as another girl came up to speak to her, the two walked away without a further word to Patty.

This was a little too much. Patty's face grew

crimson, and she turned to Lorraine with a look of angry surprise.

"I knew you wouldn't like her," said Lorraine in a dull, careless tone, "but you insisted on being introduced. She's one of the Prigs, and the Priggiest one of them all. She won't speak to a girl unless she lives on Fifth Avenue and keeps forty-'leven servants."

"Well, I think she's just as rude as she can be," said Patty; "she isn't half as nice as she looks."

"Oh, she snubbed you because you owned up that you came from the country. If you want the Prigs to like you, don't tell them you came from New Jersey."

"New Jersey is just as good as New York," said Patty, growing indignant; "and the girls there are a great deal nicer, and have better manners than the girls at this school. I think Clementine Morse is nice, though," she added, her sense of justice asserting itself.

"I don't," said Lorraine, calmly; "I don't like any of them."

With a heavy heart Patty went to her afternoon classes. The outlook was not encouraging. School life was none too pleasant, at best; but school life with a lot of hateful, disagree-

able girls promised to be nothing short of misery.

Patty drew a long breath when the lessons were over for the day, and walked home with Lorraine in no more cheerful frame of mind than her companion.

CHAPTER VI

THE REASON WHY

WHEN Patty reached home she flung herself into the library like a small whirlwind.

"It's just awful, Grandma," she exclaimed, throwing herself into a big armchair with absolute despair written on her face. "It's a horrid, *horrid* school, and I wish I didn't have to go to it. The girls are snippy and rude and disagreeable! They don't like me and I don't like them; and won't you help me to coax papa not to make me go there any more? I'd rather have a governess, or anything!"

"Tell me all about it, dear," said Grandma, as she quietly took Patty's hat and gloves away from the excited child.

"Why, they just snubbed me right and left; and Lorraine says it's because I came from the country! Did you ever hear such foolishness?"

"I certainly never did," said Grandma, smiling in spite of the seriousness of the occasion. "You are not a New York girl, but you are not countrified enough to be a subject of ridicule. Weren't any of the girls nice to you?"

"Only one, and she wasn't anything to brag of. Her name is Clementine Morse, and she's awfully pretty and sweet-looking, but I didn't see much of her. She was pleasant, but she seemed to be so more from a sense of duty than because she really liked me."

"I don't understand it," said Grandma; "*I* think you're a very nice girl, and I don't see why anyone should think otherwise."

"Well, they do," said Patty; "but never mind, I'm not going to think anything more about it until papa comes home and then I'm going to ask him not to make me go there any more."

As Grandma Elliott was a wise old lady she refrained from further questions and dropped the subject entirely. She proposed to Patty that they should go out and do a little shopping, and get some fresh air and exercise.

This proved a most successful diversion, and soon Patty was her own merry, bright self again.

But when Mr. Fairfield came home at five o'clock Patty laid the case before him in emphatic and graphic language.

"They're different kinds of horrid," she said in conclusion, "but they're *all* horrid. Only a few of them were really rude, but they all ignored me, and seemed to wish that I'd get off the earth."

"How did you treat them?" asked her father, who was really puzzled at the turn affairs had taken.

"Why, I did the best I knew how. I waited for them to be nice to me, and then when they didn't, I tried to be nice to them. But they wouldn't let me. Of course, papa, you know I know enough not to be forward, or push myself in where I'm not wanted; but I just tried to get acquainted in a nice way, and they wouldn't have it at all."

"I can't see through it, Puss; it's really most extraordinary. But I can't believe they don't like you; a nice, pretty little girl like you ought to make friends at first sight. And you always have done so."

"I know it, papa; I never had anybody act like this before. Please say I needn't go any more."

"Patty, my dear child, I can't consent to take

you away from the school at once, though I am very, very sorry for you. The whole thing seems so strange, and I can't believe but that it will straighten itself out in a day or two. Now I'll tell you what we'll do. If you'll go to school the remainder of this week and try your best to do your part toward bringing about a better understanding, I'll promise you that if you don't succeed by the end of the week you needn't return next Monday. I know it will be hard for you, but I think it only just to give the school a fair trial, and I don't want you to decide after only one day's experiences."

Patty looked disappointed, but she had a brave heart, and, too, she had implicit confidence in her father's judgment.

"All right, papa," she said; "I'll do it. I hate like fury to go back there to-morrow. But I will. And I'll do my part, too; I'll try my very best to make the girls like me, but if they don't act differently by Friday, I'll give up the fight."

"That's my own brave girl; and truly, Patty, I believe it will be all right in a day or two. It's preposterous to think that a lot of schoolgirls should unanimously agree to dislike you. I'm sure there is some explanation. Either you

exaggerate their natural hesitation toward a comparative stranger, or else there is a serious misunderstanding somewhere."

"Then you don't think it's because I came from the country, papa?"

"Nonsense! you weren't brought up in the back woods. Vernondale is too near New York to be as countrified as all that. I don't suppose you talked bad grammar, or displayed uncouth table-manners."

"No," said Patty, smiling; "I tried to behave like a little lady; but apparently I didn't succeed."

"Well, don't think another thing about it," said her father; "just go right along every day this week; and if you don't want to go—go because *I* want you to. Clinch your hands and grit your teeth, if necessary; but march along each day like my brave little soldier, and somehow I think we'll conquer in the long run."

Patty had inherited a good deal of the Fairfield pluck, and she caught the spirit of her father's advice.

"I'll do it," she said, determinedly; "I'll try as hard as I can to win, but I don't see much hope."

"Never mind the hope; just go ahead with

your efforts and let the results take care of themselves. And now let us go down and have an especially nice dinner, to restore us after this heart-rending scene."

When they entered the dining-room Patty was surprised to see Adelaide Hart at one of the tables. Patty bowed cordially as she passed her, but Adelaide returned it without enthusiasm.

Fortified by her talk with her father, Patty determined not to mind this, and passed on with a heightened colour. She did not tell her father about Adelaide, for she had resolved to fight her own battles through the week.

The dinner was very pleasant. Mr. Fairfield was merry and entertaining, Grandma was very sweet and comforting, and Patty began to feel as if life were worth living, after all.

After dinner they joined the Hamiltons in the parlour, and Patty and Lorraine talked over the events of the day.

"I thought you wouldn't like the girls," said Lorraine; "I don't like them either, and they don't like me."

"I saw Adelaide Hart in the dining-room to-night," said Patty; "does she live here?"

"Yes, they're on the fourth floor. That was

her father and mother at the table with her, and her two sisters. They're awfully disagreeable girls; I don't speak to them."

Patty was more puzzled than ever. Adelaide Hart looked like a nice girl, but she certainly had not treated Patty nicely, and Lorraine had evidently noticed it.

The second day at school was much like the first. The girls made no advances, and when Patty tried to be sociable, although not actually rude, they did not encourage her, and made use of the slightest pretext to get away from her. This left Patty entirely dependent on the society of Lorraine, and so the two were constantly together.

The third day brought no change for the better, and Patty's pride began to assert itself. What the reason could be, she had no idea, but she was certain now that the girls avoided her for some definite reason; and as she was innocent of any intentional offence she deeply resented it. She learned her lessons, went to the various classrooms and recited them, and was generally commended by the teachers for her studiousness and good deportment.

By Thursday she had come to the conclusion that there was no hope of making friends with

any of her schoolmates, and with this conviction she practically gave up the struggle. To hide her defeat she unconsciously assumed a more haughty air, and herself ignored the very girls who had neglected her. On Thursday afternoon the whole school went for a walk in Central Park, as was the custom on stated occasions. Clementine Morse asked Patty to walk with her. This was a distinct advance, and Patty would have welcomed it joyfully earlier in the week. But it came too late, and though Patty really wanted to go with Clementine, her outraged pride and growing resentment forced her to refuse and she answered coldly: "Thank you, but I'm going to walk with Lorraine."

Thursday night Mr. Fairfield asked Patty how the experiment was succeeding. They had not discussed the matter much through the week, but Mr. Fairfield had gathered a pretty accurate knowledge of the state of affairs from Patty's demeanour.

"There's no hope," said Patty; "at least, Clementine Morse did ask me to walk with her to-day, but after her coolness all the week I wasn't going to do it."

"Revenge is so sweet," said Mr. Fairfield, looking at the ceiling, but with a quizzical

expression in his eyes; "I hope you thoroughly enjoyed refusing her invitation."

"Now, papa, you're sarcastic," said Patty; "but I just guess *you* wouldn't go walking with people who had snubbed you right and left for four days!"

"It *is* hard lines, my girl; and you must use your own judgment. But don't be a brave and plucky soldier all through the week, only to be conquered by a mean little spirit of retaliation at last."

Patty thought this over pretty thoroughly, as she always thought over her father's advice, and she went to school Friday morning resolved to be magnanimous should any opportunity present itself.

Friday was the day for the gymnasium class. This was a novelty to Patty, and she greatly enjoyed it, for she was fond of physical exercise.

Lorraine did not attend gymnasium, for, as she had said, she hated exercise of any kind, and the class was not compulsory.

But Clementine was there, and as the girls stood or sat around, resting after some calisthenics, she came over to Patty.

"You're fond of this sort of thing, aren't

you?" she said, with such frank good-humour that Patty responded at once.

"Yes, I love it; I love any kind of vigorous exercise. Rowing, or swimming, or out-of-door games I like the best; but this is splendid fun. I've never been in a gymnasium before."

"Haven't you? You take to it all so readily I thought you knew all about it. You'll like the club-swinging. We'll have that next week."

"I won't be here next week."

Patty said this involuntarily. She had not meant to announce it so abruptly, but she spoke before she thought.

"Why not?" exclaimed Clementine, looking dismayed. "Don't you like the school?"

"No," said Patty, feeling suddenly an irresistible desire to probe the mystery. "No—I don't. I suppose it's my own fault, but if so, I don't know why. None of the girls like me, they will scarcely speak to me; and I'm not accustomed to being treated that way." Patty's voice trembled a little, and a suggestion of tears came into her blue eyes, but she stood her ground bravely, for she was not whining, and she knew it; but she felt that the time had come for an explanation.

"My goodness gracious!" exclaimed Clem-

entine, "don't you know why the girls don't chum with you?"

"No," said Patty, her amazement and curiosity rising above all other sentiments; "and if you know, I wish for pity's sake you'd tell me."

"Why," said Clementine, "it's only because you're such an inseparable chum of Lorraine Hamilton's. The girls can't bear her; she is so disagreeable and doleful and generally unpleasant. We've tried our best; she's been here two years, you know, but we simply *can't* like her. And so, when you came with her and seemed to be such a desperate friend of hers, why of course we couldn't take you up without taking her, too. And, too, we thought that since you were so terribly intimate with her, you probably weren't any nicer than she is. But I soon came to the conclusion that you weren't a bit like her and I want awfully to be friends with you, and so do lots of the other girls. But when I asked you to walk with me yesterday, you said no, you'd rather walk with Lorraine, and I felt myself decidedly out of it."

"I'm sorry about that," said Patty impulsively; "I was horrid, I know; but, you see, I had felt so lonely and neglected all the week that somehow yesterday I got my spunk up,

and I just felt like hurting somebody to make up for the way they had hurt me. I was awfully sorry about it afterwards."

"Oh, that's all right," said Clementine; "don't think of it again. And don't leave the school, will you? Try it another week, anyhow; I'm sure you'll like it when you get started straight."

"I think I shall," said Patty; "anyway, I'll try it one week more. I'm not a baby, you know, but it *was* horrid."

"Yes, I know; but just you wait until next week and see."

CHAPTER VII

SOME NEW FRIENDS

"WELL, Patty," said Mr. Fairfield, as they sat in their pleasant library waiting for dinner-time; "the week is up, and I suppose you have shaken the dust of the Oliphant school off of your feet for the last time."

"That's where you're wrong, Mr. Man," said Patty, smiling; "I've decided to try it for another week."

"That's pretty good news. And what brought about this sudden change of base?"

"Why, papa, the whole trouble in a nutshell is only—Lorraine Hamilton."

"Why, you don't mean she's set the girls against you!"

"Not purposely; indeed, I don't even suppose she knows it herself. But the real reason the girls didn't want to get acquainted with me was because they thought that as I was always with Lorraine, and seemed so intimate with her I

must be just like her. And do you know, they can't abide Lorraine; and, papa, she *is* trying."

"Yes, she is. It's a pity, but really I can't blame anybody for not liking that doleful little piece of femininity."

"And it isn't only her dolefulness, but she seems disagreeable by nature. You know I told you I'd try to cheer her up, and I have; but, gracious, you might as well try to amuse a weeping-willow. I never saw such a girl!"

"It's true," said Grandma; "I'm so surprised and disappointed that Ellen Howard's granddaughter should turn out like that. Mrs. Hamilton is always cheerful and pleasant, but Lorraine isn't one bit like her. At first I was sorry for the girl, but now I feel indignant with her. I know she could be different if she tried."

"But seriously, Patty," said Mr. Fairfield, "did the schoolgirls boycott you because you were friendly with Lorraine?"

"Yes, exactly that, papa. You see, I was more than friendly. We were inseparable—I was with her all the time. Of course the reason was that I hadn't anyone else to go with; but the girls didn't understand that. They thought I was——"

"Tarred with the same brush," suggested Mr. Fairfield. "Well you're not; you're a ray of sunshine compared to that murky thundercloud. And it's outrageous that you should be punished for her faults. How did you find all this out?"

"Clementine Morse told me to-day; and she says if I'll drop Lorraine, the rest of the girls are more than willing to be chummy and nice. But, papa, it doesn't seem right to drop Lorraine like that, and I don't know what to do."

"It is an awkward situation, I admit; but justice demands that your welfare should be considered as well as hers. Now look at it squarely and fairly. You've devoted this whole week to Lorraine, and apparently it hasn't done her one bit of good and it has done you harm. And supposing you were to keep on in that way, what would be the result?"

"I don't believe it would be a bit different," said Patty, honestly. "She's been at the school two years before this, and Clementine says that they've all tried to make her more jolly and sociable, but they couldn't do it, so they finally gave it up."

"It's an unusual case and a very unfortunate

one," said Mr. Fairfield seriously. "But though Lorraine isn't pleasant and companionable, there is no reason why you should sacrifice yourself for her sake."

"But what can I do? Lorraine is right here in the house and I have to walk to school and back with her, and I don't want to be mean to her."

"Your own tact must manage that, Patty," said Grandma, in her decided way. Patty had often noticed that when Grandma Elliott gave advice, it was good advice and very much to the point. So she listened with interest as Grandma went on: "You needn't cut Lorraine, or drop her friendship entirely; but you can certainly be friends with the other girls, even though she is not. When they invite you or give you an opportunity to join their pleasures, give Lorraine a fair chance, too, and if she isn't capable of taking advantage of it, let her alone. You have done your part and are no further responsible. Of course you understand that this is not to be said in so many words, but I know your sense of honour and justice and your kind heart will make it possible for you to manage it tactfully and well."

"That's exactly right," said Mr. Fairfield;

"Grandma has expressed in words just what I had in mind. Now go ahead, Chicken, do all you can for Lorraine, but not to the extent of injuring your own standing among those whom you have every reason to wish to please. And I think after a week or two matters will adjust themselves, and you will fall naturally into the right groove. You have had an unpleasant experience, but I think it will come out right yet, and perhaps in the long run you may be able to help Lorraine, after all."

"You are the dearest people!" cried Patty, flinging one arm around her father's neck, while with the other hand she patted Grandma's pretty white hair; "any girl ought to be good and nice with such helpers and advisers as you two. I'm sure it will all come out right, and I'm as happy as a clam now. It's been a horrid week, but we won't think about that any more and I know next week will be lovely."

"That's the way to talk," said her father; "forget the unpleasant things that happen and think only about the happy ones. I believe that remark, or something similar, has been made before, but it's just as true as if it hadn't been. And now, the affairs of state being settled, I'd like to have some dinner."

As they went down in the elevator they met Lorraine and her mother.

"How nice you look," said Patty, glancing at a pretty new frock the girl was wearing.

"Oh, I think it's horrid," said Lorraine, fretfully; "it's such an ugly shade of blue and the sleeves are too big."

"Now you see how it is, papa," said Patty a few moments later as they seated themselves at their own table; "you heard what Lorraine said about her dress, and that's just the way she always is. Nothing pleases her."

"Bad case of chronic discontent," said Mr. Fairfield, "and, I fear, incurable. I'm glad you are not like that."

After dinner, as they often did, they paused for a few moments in the attractive hotel library. In a few moments the Harts came in, and Adelaide went directly up to Patty and said:

"Won't you come and talk to us a little while? I want you to meet my sisters."

Patty was quite ready to meet this cordiality half-way, and mutual introductions all around were the result.

Mr. Hart and Mr. Fairfield soon hit upon congenial topics for conversation, and Mrs.

Hart proved pleasantly entertaining to Grandma Elliott.

This left the young people to themselves, and Patty found the three girls merry and full of fun.

Adelaide was about Patty's own age, Jeannette was younger, and Editha, the oldest sister, who was eighteen, was no longer a schoolgirl. But she was not out in society, and had teachers at home in French and music.

Patty admired Editha very much, she was so pretty and graceful and did not put on young ladyfied airs.

Adelaide was not pretty, but she had bright eyes and a humorous smile, and Patty soon discovered that to have fun was the principal end and aim of her existence.

Jeannette seemed to be a nice child, and Patty suddenly realised that it must be a jolly sort of thing to be one of three sisters.

"I quite envy you each other," she said, "you must have such good times together."

"Yes, we do," said Adelaide; "haven't you any brothers or sisters?"

"No," said Patty, "not either. And I have no mother; she died when I was a baby. But I shall have, next spring," she added, smiling,

" for then my father is going to marry a lady I'm very fond of. She won't be a bit like a mother, for she's only six years older than I am, but she'll be just like a sister, and I shall be so glad to have her with us. But I never get lonely; I have lots of things to amuse myself, and then there's always papa and Grandma."

" How do you like the Oliphant school? " asked Editha.

" Pretty well," said Patty, smiling; " at least I shall like it when I get a little better acquainted. I've only been there a week yet."

Adelaide said nothing about Lorraine, but somehow Patty felt sure that Clementine had spoken a good word for her; and now as she had a chance to justify herself to Adelaide, she was her own happy, merry little self, and the four girls got on famously.

It was not long before Patty reached the conclusion that the Harts were a thoroughly interesting family. Adelaide seemed really clever, and Patty was amazed to hear her tell of a fountain which she had herself constructed in the parlour of their apartment.

" Why, it was as easy as anything," she said; " I just took a big bronze vase—a flat one, you know, that papa got in Rome or Florence or

somewhere—and then I took an antique bronze lamp, Egyptian, I think it is, and I turned the lamp upside down on top of the vase. And then I got a piece of lead pipe, and of course we had to have a plumber to connect it with the water-pipe. But the bathroom is just the other side of the partition, and so that was easy. Then I put palms and plants and things all around it and so it makes a lovely fountain. Would you like to see it? Can't you come up to our rooms now?"

"I'd like to ever so much," said Patty, and after a word to Grandma the four girls went off together.

The Harts' apartment was very similar to the Fairfields', but on the floor above them. It was furnished with a queer jumble of tastes. The main furniture, of course, was that which belonged to the hotel, but the individual touches were eccentric and rather picturesque.

The fountain was really surprising, and Patty thought Adelaide's description had by no means done it justice. The classic-shaped bronzes were exceedingly ornamental, the palms were tall and luxurious, and the soft tinkle of the continually falling water made a delightful sound. In the lower basin were several gold-

fish, and Patty could scarcely believe that Adelaide had planned and executed the whole affair herself.

"Why, it was nothing to do," said the modest architect; "I love to build things. I've made shirt-waist boxes for all of us; I'll make you one if you want it."

"Oh, thank you," cried Patty, quite overcome by this delightful change in Adelaide's attitude toward her; "I suppose you'll think me very ignorant, but really I don't know what a shirt-waist box is."

"Oh, that's just the name of them," explained Editha; "you don't have to keep shirt-waists in them. They're just big boxes, with covers like a trunk, and Adelaide does make them beautifully. She covers them with a kind of Chinese matting, and she even puts on brass corners and hinges. Come into my room with me and I will show you one."

They all followed Editha to her pretty bedroom, and Patty saw and admired not only the shirt-waist box, but many of Editha's other treasures. Among them was a box of chocolates, and soon the girls were nibbling away at the candy, and, as is usual in such circumstances, growing very friendly and well acquainted.

But though the Hart girls were so pleasant to Patty, they were not so amiable with one another. Editha patronised Adelaide and treated her as if she were very young and ignorant. Adelaide resented this, but she in turn domineered over Jeannette, and there were frequent sharp bickerings back and forth which made Patty feel decidedly uncomfortable.

However, the Harts had a strong sense of humour, and more often than not their squabbles ended with a joke and a merry peal of laughter.

It was all very novel and entertaining, and when Mrs. Hart returned to the apartment Patty was surprised to learn that it was after nine o'clock, and that Grandma had sent word for her to come home.

"Well," she said, as she sat down in a little chair by her father's side, "I've made three friends, anyway. The Hart girls are awfully nice. They seem to be rather snappy to each other, but they were lovely to me, and I think I shall like them. They're full of fun and jokes, and Adelaide is the cleverest thing you ever saw. Why, papa, she has a whole fountain right in their drawing-room."

"And a terrace and a driveway?"

"No, not quite that, but I wouldn't be surprised the next time I go to find she has built one. She can build anything."

"Well, I'm glad you've found somebody to play with, Puss, and I hope they'll be more satisfactory than the dismal Lorraine. By the way, what became of her? Did she melt into thin air?"

"I don't know, I'm sure; I didn't see her at all after dinner."

"I suppose she abdicated in favour of Adelaide. But don't drop her all at once, Puss. Hunt her up to-morrow and offer her a chance to have her share of the fun, whether she takes it or not."

CHAPTER VIII

A TEA-PARTY

ON Saturday, when Patty saw the Harts in the dining-room, she asked them to come to see her that afternoon. Jeannette was going out with her mother, but the other two willingly accepted the invitation.

"I'll ask Lorraine, too," said Patty, "and we'll make tea and have a real cosey time."

"The tea sounds cheerful," said Adelaide, "but if you're going to have Lorraine, I'll have to ask you to excuse me."

"Oh, then of course I won't ask her," said Patty, quickly, for she did not think it just to the others to insist upon Lorraine's presence; "I can have her some other time just as well. But Clementine Morse said she would come and see me this afternoon."

"That's all right," said Editha; "everybody likes Clementine."

In a gay mood Patty prepared for her little tea-party. She easily persuaded Grandma to

send out for a box of marshmallows and a big bag of chestnuts. "For," she said, "that lovely wood fire is just the very place to toast marshmallows and roast chestnuts. I know you'll like Clementine Morse, Grandma, she's so sweet and pretty, and I know she'll like you —for the very same reasons." Patty paused in her preparations to bestow a butterfly kiss on Grandma's forehead, and then went on arranging her dainty tea-table.

"It 'll be almost like the Tea Club," she said, as she piled up the sugar lumps and cut thin slices of lemon. "I suppose they're having a meeting this afternoon, and Marian is being president. Do you know, Grandma, sometimes I get a little homesick for the Tea Club."

"I should think you would, my dear. The Vernondale girls are a nice set. But perhaps you can get up a Tea Club here."

"I'd like that," said Patty, "but the girls are all so different here. They seem divided, and in Vernondale we were all united, just like one big family."

The Harts came early. Editha brought a piece of exquisite fancy-work. She was a dainty, fragile girl, like a piece of Dresden china, and

Patty looked at her in admiration as she deftly worked at the beautiful embroidery.

"What clever girls you are," said Patty; "I couldn't do anything like that, if I tried; and I couldn't make the things Adelaide makes."

"Probably you can do a lot of things that we can't do," said Editha, as she threaded her needle.

"I can do lots of things," said Patty, laughing, "but I can't do anything very well. I'm a Jack-of-all-trades. The only thing I really understand is housekeeping; and here, of course, I've no opportunity for that."

"Housekeeping!" exclaimed Adelaide, "do you really know how to do that? Wherever did you learn?"

"I used to keep house in my home in New Jersey," said Patty, quite ignoring the fact that Lorraine had warned her against mentioning her country home.

But Adelaide apparently did not share Lorraine's views on this subject.

"How lovely!" she cried. "Did you have a whole house of your own, where you could drive tacks in the wall and do whatever you pleased?"

"Yes," said Patty, "and I had entire charge

of it. I always ordered everything; and I can cook, too."

"Then you're cleverer than we are," said Editha, with an air of decision; "cooking is much more difficult than embroidering centre-pieces or nailing boards together."

"Speak for yourself," cried Adelaide; "of course anybody can do embroidery, but it isn't so awful easy to nail boards together properly!"

"Why do you do it then?" retorted her sister; "I'm sure nobody wants the ridiculous things you make."

"All right then," said Adelaide, "give me back that book-rack I gave you yesterday. I'll be glad to have it for myself."

"Injun giver!" cried Editha, looking at her sister, angrily at first and then breaking into a laugh. "Take it, if you want it. I don't care for it."

"Wild horses couldn't get that thing away from her," said Adelaide to Patty; "she's just crazy over it."

"I am not!" cried Editha; "it's nothing but useless rubbish."

"All right, then I *will* take it, and I'll give it to Patty. And just you wait till I ever make you anything again, Editha Hart!"

"I won't have to wait long," said Editha, smiling good-naturedly once more; and then suddenly Adelaide laughed, too, and harmony was restored.

Soon Clementine Morse came.

"My brother brought me," she explained, as she came in, "and he's coming for me again at five o'clock."

Patty introduced her new friend to Grandma, and then Clementine greeted the Hart girls gaily.

"Isn't it lovely," she exclaimed, "for you all to live in this same house together! Where you can visit each other whenever you like, without waiting for a brother to come and bring you or take you home."

"We'd wait a long while for our brother," said Adelaide, laughing, "and so would Patty. You're lucky to have a brother, Clem."

"Yes, I know it; and Clifford is an awful nice boy, but just so sure as I want him. he wants to be going somewhere else. Still, he's pretty good to me. Oh, what lovely marshmallows! are you going to toast them on hat-pins?"

"Good guesser!" cried Patty, "that's exactly what we're going to do, and we're going to do it right now. I'll toast yours, Editha, and pop

them into your mouth, so you won't get your fingers sticky."

"No, thank you," said Editha, rolling up her work; "half the fun is in the toasting. Let's all do it together."

"We didn't wear any hats," said Adelaide, "so we haven't any hat-pins with us."

"That's one of the disadvantages of living in the same hotel, after all," said Clementine; "of course having no hat-pins, you can't be in the toasting party at all."

But Grandma came to the rescue with some knitting-needles, and soon four laughing girls with very red cheeks were sitting on the floor in front of the fire, and the marshmallows were rapidly disappearing. The chestnuts were voted to be nearly as much fun as the confections, and the feast was at its height when the doorbell rang and Kenneth Harper was announced.

"Oh, Ken!" cried Patty, scrambling to her feet, "I'm so glad to see you. We're having a roasting and toasting party, and it's lucky you came before it's all eaten up."

Kenneth shook hands with Patty, and then politely greeted Grandma Elliott, who was always glad to welcome the boy.

Then he was presented to the girls, and in a few minutes the young people were chattering like friendly and well-acquainted magpies.

Patty, quite in her element, hovered round the tea-table and made tea in her usual successful fashion. Grandma produced a surprise in the shape of dear little frosted cakes, and the healthy young appetites did full justice to all these things.

"How is the farm growing, Patty?" inquired Kenneth; "I thought I'd come down and mow the grass for you."

"I wish you would," said Patty. "It's growing all over the place and threatens to choke the tulip bulbs before they sprout. But oh, Ken, you ought to see Adelaide's palmery, or palmistry, or whatever it is. She has an old Venetian fountain that plays all the time, and goldfish swim in it, and the palms grow on its banks, and it's perfectly lovely, and she made it all herself."

"I always told you that the city girls were clever," said Kenneth, smiling at Patty. "Still, a home-made fountain is really outside of my experience."

"It wasn't difficult," said Adelaide; "I have a mechanical turn of mind, and the fountain

was an easy matter. But what I'm puzzling over now is how to build a suspension bridge across the library table. Our library is so small and the table is so big and there are so many of us to sit around it that you can't cross the room at all. And so I thought a suspension bridge would be both useful and ornamental."

"I'm sure it would," said Kenneth, "and as I expect to be a bridge-builder some day, I might help you draw your plans now; it will be good practise."

"I wish you'd hurry up and get it built," said Editha; "it will be useful for a great many purposes. I would stand on it sometimes and recite 'I Stood on the Bridge at Midnight'; it would be so very appropriate."

"I hope you'll do it at midnight, and then the rest of us needn't hear your recitation," put in Adelaide.

Patty feared one of the sisterly squabbles, and hastened to interrupt it. "I would come over and stand on your bridge and recite 'How Horatius Kept the Bridge.'"

"'And I will stand at thy right hand and keep the bridge with thee,'" said Kenneth in exaggerated dramatic tones.

"Well, a bridge seems to be a household ne-

cessity," said Clementine. "I don't see how we've worried along without one as long as we have."

In merry nonsense and chaff the time slipped away, and everyone was surprised when Clifford Morse came for his sister, and said it was after five o'clock. The boy was invited in, and Patty begged of him that Clementine might stay a few moments longer.

Although Clifford Morse was only eighteen, he was a young giant. More than six feet tall, he was broad-shouldered and strong-limbed. His good-looking boyish face was framed in a thick close-cut crop of brown hair, and his athletic carriage and bearing was marked by the usual athlete's grace.

The courteous respect he showed to Grandma Elliott, and his frank pleasant manner toward the girls, proved him a well-born and well-bred young American citizen, and, though meeting for the first time, he and Kenneth Harper instinctively felt a mutual friendliness.

"This is right down jolly," he exclaimed, as he took the cup of tea Patty offered him. "I have attended affairs that were called afternoon teas, but there must have been a mistake somewhere; they were oppressive and awe-inspiring

functions, but this is the real thing. Is it of frequent occurrence, Miss Fairfield, or must I wait a long and weary while before I may come again—to take my sister home."

"You must ask Grandma," said Patty, laughing; "she is the captain and the cook and the crew of this *Nancy Bell*. I am only the midshipmite."

Young Morse turned to Grandma Elliott with his merry smile. "May I hope to come again," he said, "if I promise to be very good and not drink up all the tea?"

"You may come any Saturday afternoon when we are at home," said Grandma, smiling; "but it's only fair to warn you that we're very rarely home on Saturdays."

"I shall come," said Clifford, "and I'll come early, and I'll make myself so charming that you'll quite forget all other engagements."

"You may try it," said Grandma, looking kindly at the merry boy.

The click of the key was heard in the front door and in a few moments Mr. Fairfield joined the party.

Then there were more introductions and more jokes, and much laughter, for Mr. Fairfield was a universal favourite with children and young

people, and had a talent for always saying and doing exactly the right thing.

He was as courteous to the girls, including Patty, as though they had been grown-up ladies, and he greeted the boys with a frank cordiality as of man to man, which delighted their young souls.

Then Clementine declared she must go home, and, accompanied by Kenneth, she and her brother took their departure.

Then Editha and Adelaide went away, and Patty sat down by her father's side to talk it all over.

"We had a beautiful time, papa," she said, "and they're a nice crowd. But what do you think? The Hart girls said they wouldn't come if I asked Lorraine. So I didn't ask her and I'm glad of it, for she would have spoiled the whole party. But it does seem too bad, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it does, Puss, but you mustn't take it too much to heart. You're not responsible for Lorraine's unpopularity, and you mustn't allow it to spoil your good times. Whenever you can help her, or give her pleasure in any way that she will accept graciously, I know you'll do it."

"Indeed I will, for I'm really going to try to make that girl happier. But of course I can't force the other girls to help me, though after I know them better I may be able to coax them to."

"You're a good little girl, Patty, and you're showing a kind and generous spirit. Let the good work go on, and some day when you least expect it I'll help you out with it."

CHAPTER IX

HILDA

ON Monday morning Patty started for her second week at the Oliphant school without any misgivings as to her reception by the girls.

Although little had been said regarding Lorraine, and though Patty had loyally refrained from disclaiming her as an intimate friend, yet Clementine and Adelaide both understood matters better now, and were quite ready to accept Patty on her own merits.

So it came about that she walked to school between Adelaide and Lorraine, and though her two companions had little to say to each other, Patty skilfully managed to be pleasant and sociable with both.

Of course the morning was entirely occupied with lessons, but at the noon hour Adelaide appropriated Patty and carried her off to join a group off girls who were merrily chatting together. Clementine was one of them, and in

a few moments Patty discovered that they were all Gigs, and seemed proud of the appellation.

"It will be the most fun," Flossy Fisher was saying; "I'll manage the Elephant—I can always wind her around my finger—and she won't know what it's all about until she finds herself down cellar in front of the mirror. You'll come to it, won't you, Patty?"

"What is it, and where, and when, and how, and why?" asked Patty, laughing; "you see I'm a new girl, and a green one. But I suppose from your mention of the elephant, you're talking about a circus."

"It will be a circus," said Clementine, "but a little private one of our own. The Elephant is our pet name for Miss Oliphant, and we Gigs are always playing tricks on her. She pretends she doesn't like it, but I think she does, for often behind her frowning spectacles she hides a smiling face."

"Isn't Clementine the cleverest thing!" exclaimed Adelaide; "she can misquote from all the standard British and American authors. It's a great thing to be the bright and shining light of the Literature class."

"But tell me more about this elephant per-

formance," said Patty; "why are you going to put Miss Oliphant down cellar?"

"Sh! breathe it not aloud," warned Clementine; "the Wild West must not hear it. It isn't until Hallowe'en, you know, and then——"

The announcement of luncheon interrupted this conversation, and the girls started for the dining-room. Adelaide insisted that Patty should sit at their table, but for two reasons Patty hesitated about this.

In the first place she did not quite want to desert Lorraine so completely; and second, she was not yet sure that she wanted to proclaim herself one of the Gigs. Still less did she want to be a Prig, and she well knew she could never by the widest stretch of imagination be called a Dig, so she concluded not to ally herself definitely with either of these mystic orders until she had opportunity for further consideration.

So she firmly but good-naturedly declined to change her table for the present, and took her usual place by the side of Lorraine.

"Well," said Lorraine, pettishly, "you seem to have made a great many new friends."

"Yes," said Patty, determined to be pleasant, "I have. I'm getting better acquainted with

the girls, and I think they're a very nice lot. You can't judge much the first few days, you know. Clementine is a dear, isn't she?"

"I don't see anything dear about her. I think she's silly and stuck-up."

"Why, Lorraine, how absurd! Clementine isn't stuck-up at all."

"Well, I think she is, and, anyway, I don't like her." After which gracious speech Lorraine devoted herself to eating her luncheon, and was so unresponsive to further attempts at conversation that Patty gave it up, and turned to talk to the girl on the other side of her.

This was Hilda Henderson, an English girl, who had lived in America only about two years. She was slender, yet with a suggestion of hardy strength in her small bones and active muscles. She had a quick nervous manner, and her head, which was daintily set on her shoulders, moved with the alert motions of a bird. Not exactly pretty, but with dark straight hair and dark eyes, she looked like a girl of fine traits and strong character.

Patty had liked the appearance of this girl from the first, but had not seemed to be able to make friends with her.

But fortified by the new conditions which were

developing, she made overtures with a little more confidence.

"You are a boarding pupil here, aren't you?" said Patty. "Do you know anything about the plans for a Hallowe'en party?"

"No," said Hilda, "except that there's going to be one. I fancy it will be just like last year's party."

"Are they nice? What do you do at them?"

"Yes, they're rather good fun. We bob for apples, and go downstairs backward, and sail nut-shell boats, and all those things."

Patty said nothing further about Miss Oliphant's part in it, as she thought perhaps it was a secret.

"You must have real good times living here," she went on; "so many of you girls all together."

"Yes, it's not so very horrid; though it's very unlike an English boarding school. American girls are so enthusiastic."

"Yes, we are; but I like that, don't you?"

"Oh, if one has anything to be excited over, it's all very well; but you waste such a lot of enthusiasm that, when anything comes along really worth while, you have no words left to show your appreciation of it."

"Oh, I have," said Patty, laughing. "Or if I haven't, I use the same words over again. They don't wear out, you know."

"Yes, they do," said Hilda, earnestly; "you say everything is perfectly grand or gorgeous when it's most commonplace. And then when you come across something really grand or gorgeous what can you say?"

"Of course that's all true; but that's just a way we have. You like America, don't you?"

"Yes, rather well. But I never shall learn to rave over nothing the way you all do."

"How do you know I do? You scarcely know me at all yet."

"You're not as much so as the rest. And I think I shall like you. But I don't make friends easily, and often I don't get on with the very ones I most want to."

"Oh, you'll get on with me all right if you have the least mite of a wish to. I make friends awfully easily. That is, I generally have," supplemented Patty, suddenly remembering her experiences of the past week.

"I think I'd like to be friends with you," said Hilda, with an air of thoughtful caution, "but of course I can't say yet."

"Of course not!" said Patty, unable to resist

poking a little fun at this very practical girl; "I think you ought to know anybody four weeks before you decide, and then take them on trial."

"I think so, too," said Hilda, heartily, taking Patty quite seriously, though the speech had been meant entirely in jest. "You're awfully sensible, for an American."

"Yes, I think I am," said Patty, demurely.

After luncheon another triumph awaited Patty.

Gertrude Lyons and Maude Carleton came up to her, and each taking her by one arm, walked her over to the bay-window, where they might talk uninterruptedly.

"We want you to be in our set," said Gertrude; "we have the nicest girls in school in our set, and I know you'll like it best of any."

"And we have the best times," put in Maude; "none of the sets can do the things we do."

Patty did not altogether like this sudden change of attitude on the part of these girls. And, too, they seemed to her a little condescending in their manner. She liked better Hilda Henderson's proposition, which, though less flattering, seemed to promise better results.

And she had not forgotten Gertrude's real rudeness the week before.

"Thank you ever so much," she said, "but I'm not sure that I want to join your set. Last week you didn't want me, and turn about is fair play." Patty's pleasant smile, as she said this, robbed the words of all harshness and made it impossible for the girls to feel offended.

"I suppose I *was* hateful," said Gertrude, "and I take it all back. But, you see, everybody said you were Lorraine Hamilton's chum and that you were just like her. Now, you're not a bit like her, and I don't believe you're such a great chum of hers. Are you?"

"I don't know how to answer that," said Patty, smiling; "I'm a friend of Lorraine's, and always shall be, I hope; but I'm not such a chum of hers that I can't be friends with anybody else."

"That's what I said," put in Maude; "and so there's no reason why you can't belong to our set, even if Lorraine doesn't."

"Why do they call you the Prigs?" asked Patty.

Gertrude laughed. "They think the name teases us," she said; "but it doesn't a bit. They call us Prigs because they think we're

stuck-up, and so we are. We're the richest girls in the school and we belong to the best families. But that isn't all; we have the best manners, and we're never rude or awkward, and we're always perfect in deportment, so we're almost always on the Privileged Roll."

"What's the Privileged Roll?" asked Patty.

"Why, it's a special Roll of Honour, and if your name's on it you have a lot of little extra favours and privileges that the others don't have. The Gigs, now, they never get on the Privileged Roll. They have a lot of fun, but I think it's silly and babyish."

"And the Digs?" asked Patty. "Are they on the Privileged Roll?"

"Not often," said Gertrude; "they get perfect in their lessons, of course, but they're so busy studying they are apt to forget their manners. Hilda Henderson is a Dig, but she has good manners because she's English. English girls always do; they can't seem to help it."

"I like Hilda Henderson," said Patty; "she seems to me an awfully nice girl."

"Yes, she's nice enough," said Maude, carelessly; "but she's rather heavy and not up to our ideas of fun."

The class-bell rang just then and with a

promise to think about joining Gertrude's set, Patty left them.

After school she walked home with Lorraine. Adelaide had been detained and the two girls went home alone.

"I suppose you'll be dreadfully thick with the Prigs, now that they've taken you up," said Lorraine.

"They haven't taken me up yet," replied Patty, a little shortly.

"Well, they're beginning to hang around you, so I suppose they will take you up soon."

"They've already asked me to join their set, if that's what you mean by 'taking up.'"

"Well, then of course you'll join it, and I suppose you'll have no use for me after that."

"Now, look here, Lorraine, we might as well have this out now, once for all. I'd like to be a friend of yours, but there are lots of times when you make me feel as if you didn't want me to be. And besides, I expect to be friends with everybody. That's the way I always have been; it's my nature. And if being friends with you is going to prevent my having anything to do with anybody else in the whole school, why then I'm not going to do it, that's all."

"I told you so," said Lorraine, staring moodily before her; "I knew when those Prigs took you up you'd drop me."

"But I won't drop you, Lorraine," said Patty, exasperated by such injustice. "And if you drop me, it's your own fault. What is the matter with you, anyway? Why don't you like anybody?"

"Because nobody likes me, I suppose," and Lorraine's face wore such a helpless, hopeless expression that Patty's indignation calmed down a little.

"I feel like shaking you," she said, half angry, half laughing. "Now, see here, why don't you try a different tack? Just make up your mind that you like everybody, and act so, and first thing you know they'll all like you."

Patty expected an irritable retort of some kind, and was surprised when Lorraine said, wistfully:

"Do you really think so, Patty?"

"Of course I do," cried Patty, delighted to find Lorraine so responsive; "just you try it, girlie, and see if I'm not a true prophet."

"I'll try," said Lorraine, who seemed to be in a particularly gentle mood, at least for the moment; "but I haven't much hope of myself

or anybody else; I'm cross and ugly by nature, and I don't suppose I'll ever be any different."

"Oh, pshaw!" cried Patty; "yes, you will. Never mind what you are by nature. Try art. Make believe you're happy and jolly, like other people, and suddenly you'll discover that you are."

CHAPTER X

GRIGS

THE more Patty saw of Hilda Henderson the better she liked her.

Hilda was not quite so scatter-brained as Clementine, yet she was far more merry and companionable than Lorraine.

So it came about that Hilda and Patty were much together.

They often walked together when the school went for a promenade in the Park, and Patty was surprised to find that there was a lot of fun in the English girl, after all.

Then, too, they were congenial in their tastes. They liked the same things, they read the same books, and they almost always agreed in their opinions.

One day the girls were gathered in the gymnasium. It was recreation hour, and the various groups of young people were chatting and laughing.

Patty sat in a window-seat, looking out at the steadily falling rain.

"It's a funny thing," she said, "but although

a rainy day is supposed to be depressing, it doesn't affect me that way at all. I feel positively hilarious, and I don't care who knows it."

"So do I," said Hilda; "I'm as merry as a grig."

"I know most of your English allusions," said Patty, "but 'grig' is too many for me. What is a grig, and why is it merry?"

"A grig," said Hilda, "why, it's a kind of cricket or grasshopper, I think. I don't know Natural History very well, but the habits of grigs must be merry, because 'as merry as a grig' is the only thing anybody ever heard about them."

"Of course grasshoppers are merry," said Clementine; "you can tell that by the way they jump. But grig is a much nicer name than grasshopper; it sounds more jumpy."

"Girls!" said Patty, with an air of sudden importance, "I have a most brilliant idea!"

"Your first?" inquired Adelaide, interestedly.

"No, indeed," said Patty, "I often have them when I'm in your vicinity. But this is really great. You know that foolishness about Prigs and Digs and Gigs?"

"Yes," said the girls in chorus.

"Well, there's no sense to it; it doesn't mean anything, really."

"Do you happen to know, Miss Fairfield, that you're attacking old and time-honoured institutions of the Oliphant school?" asked Clementine in mock indignation.

"So much the worse for the honourable Time," rejoined Patty. "Now listen; I think we can have a society, a real true society, I mean, that will be a lot more fun than any of those ancient and honourable orders."

"Grigs!" cried Hilda, with a sudden flash of understanding.

"Yes," said Patty, "Grigs. You see, I never could make up my mind which of those other three sets I'd belong to, because none of them seemed to fit me. Now if we start a society of Grigs, a regular club, you know, we can invite anybody we want in the school to join it."

"What kind of a society will it be?" demanded Adelaide.

"What is the chief characteristic of a grig?" demanded Patty in return.

"Well, I never met one," said Adelaide, "but Hilda says they have nothing but merriment to distinguish them from other animals."

"That's enough," said Patty. "All that the members of our society need do is to be merry. Honest, girls, don't you think it will be fun?"

"I do," said Hilda, catching the spirit of the thing at once. "And we'll have officers and dues, and regular meetings, just like——"

"Just like Parliament," put in Clementine, "and then, my British subject, you'll feel quite at home."

"I used to belong to a club in Vernondale," said Patty, "and we didn't do anything but just drink tea and have fun at our meetings. We were merry as grigs, though we didn't call ourselves by that name. But I think that's a jolly name for a society—especially a society that has to be made up of Prigs and Gigs and Digs."

"So do I," said Hilda; "let's organise right away."

"Oh, we can't," said Patty, "we haven't decided what girls to ask, or anything."

"Let's organise first," said Adelaide, "just we four, you know, and then decide on the other members afterwards."

"All right," said Patty, "but the bell will ring in a minute and we won't have time now.

Besides, we can't do it in such a hurry. Now I'll tell you what; you girls come down to my house Saturday morning and then we'll do it all up properly."

"That's a jolly lark," said Hilda; "I'll be there."

And the others agreed to come, too.

So on Saturday morning the Fairfields' library was the scene of a most animated club organisation.

"We ought to have some definite aim," said Hilda, as they talked over ways and means.

"We have," said Patty decidedly; "I've been thinking this thing over, and I really think that to be merry and to scatter merriment around the world is a worthy enough aim for anybody."

"How do you mean to scatter it?" asked Adelaide, with a look of utter bewilderment at the idea.

"I don't know yet, exactly," said Patty; "that's for the club to decide; but I'm sure there are lots of ways. You know the charitable societies scatter food and clothing, and there's a Sunshine Society that scatters help or aid or something, and I do believe that there are plenty of ways to scatter merriment."

"Do you mean to poor people?" asked Clementine.

"Not only to poor people," said Patty; "it doesn't make any difference whether they're poor or not; everybody likes to have some fun, or if they don't, they ought to."

"It's a great scheme," exclaimed Hilda, her eyes shining as she thought of various possibilities. "For one thing we could collect comic papers and take them to the hospitals."

"Yes, that will be fine," said Clementine, "for when most people send reading matter to the hospitals they send dry old books and poky old magazines that nobody can read. I know, because I have been to the hospital sometimes to read to the children, and I've seen the literature that was sent in. And of all forlorn stuff!"

"Yes, that's the kind of thing I mean," said Patty; "and we can go to the hospitals ourselves sometimes and chirk up the patients and make them laugh. Clementine could sing some of her funny songs. But that's only a part of it. We'll have meetings, too, where we'll just be merry as grigs ourselves, and make fun for each other."

"Well, I think the whole thing is lovely,"

said Adelaide; "let's organise right straight off. Patty, of course you'll be president."

"Of course I won't," said Patty, quickly; "Hilda must be president, because if it hadn't been for her we would never have known what grigs were, and so we couldn't be them."

Hilda demurred at accepting the honourable position, and Adelaide frankly said she thought Patty better adapted for it, but Patty was firm and insisted that the office should be Hilda's.

"I'll be secretary, if you like," she said, "or anything else; but I won't be president."

So Hilda was made president and Patty secretary of the noble society of Grigs. Clementine was appointed vice-president and Adelaide treasurer.

The four officers wanted to enter upon their duties at once, and Adelaide begged that they would decide upon what the dues should be, so that she might collect them. Clementine asked Hilda to go home, in order that she might be president during her absence; and Patty declared that there was no use trying to keep the minutes of a society of Grigs, for it would read like a nonsense-book.

But Hilda, who had some notions of taking

charge of a meeting, called the members to order and expressed her views.

"We don't want to be bothered with much in the way of rules and regulations," she said; "but we must have some few laws if we're going to be a society at all. Now, first, how many members shall we have?"

"First," said Patty, "where are you going to meet? do you think it will be more fun just to have a school society and have our meetings there, say in the gymnasium, or do you think it will be nicer to meet around at each other's houses?"

"Oh, around at the houses," said Clementine. "Let's meet Saturday mornings, just like this. If we have it at school, we'll have to ask a lot of girls we don't want, or else they'll get mad."

This argument was considered good, and meetings at the homes of the members seemed to be the best plan.

"But not every week," said Adelaide; "I couldn't come so often. I have a singing lesson every other Saturday morning."

So it was agreed that the Grigs should meet once a fortnight during the school term, and it was furthermore settled that eight members would be enough for the present.

"For our rooms are awfully small," said Hilda, "and it will be all I can do to get eight in."

"Our house is big enough," said Clementine, "but I think eight is enough to start with, until we see how the club goes. Now who shall the other four be?"

"How would it do," said Hilda, "for us each to select one?"

"Do they have to be girls in the school?" asked Adelaide; "because, if not, I'll ask Editha. She's merry enough for anybody and she loves to do things for hospital people."

"Why, of course they don't have to be school-girls," said Hilda; "perhaps it's better to have some who aren't, and then those who are and whom we don't ask won't have so much reason to get mad about it."

Although somewhat ambiguous, this speech was understood by the other Grigs, and they all heartily agreed to it.

Then Clementine said she would ask Flossy Fisher. As Flossy was the embodiment of merriment, they all thought her a most acceptable member.

"I shall ask Mary Sargent," said Hilda, "You girls don't know her very well, and she

seems quiet, but really there's a lot of fun in her, and you'll find it out."

"Oh, I think she's jolly," said Clementine; "anybody must be to draw such funny pictures as she does. She got me giggling in class the other day, and I came near being marked in deportment. It was an awful narrow escape. Who are you going to ask, Patty?"

Patty looked at her three fellow-Grigs. "I've made up my mind," she said, and her eyes twinkled; "I shall ask Lorraine Hamilton."

A chorus of groans greeted this announcement, and then Clementine said: "That's a good joke, Patty, and an awfully funny one; but, honest, who do you *really* mean to ask?"

"It isn't a joke," said Patty. "You girls each made your selection, and nobody found any fault; now I think I ought to have the same privilege."

"But we chose merry girls," said Adelaide; "nobody could call Lorraine as merry as a Grig! Oh, Patty, she'll spoil the whole club."

"But listen, girls; the club is to make other people merry as well as to be merry ourselves, and don't you think it would be a good thing if we could make Lorraine merry?"

"Yes," said Hilda; "but the people we're

going to cheer up are not members of the club. I think the members ought to be really grigs and not croaking ravens, like Lorraine."

"If she's a member, I won't be," said Adelaide, "and Editha won't either."

"Then that settles it," said Patty, cheerfully; "of course, Adelaide, I wouldn't do anything that would keep you out of the club. But look here, girls: if Lorraine gets more pleasant and sunshiny after a while, will you let her come in then?"

"If she gets to be as merry as a grig, of course she can come in," said Adelaide; "Lorraine is a nice enough girl, except that she's so disagreeable and always throws a wet blanket on everything. Why, we couldn't have any fun at all at the meetings, if she sat up there, looking as cross as two sticks."

"That's so," said Patty, with a sigh; "but never you mind, she's going to improve. She said she'd try to, and somehow the Grigs must help her."

"And in the meantime you must choose somebody else, Patty."

"No, I don't want to; let's just leave her place vacant for the present, and if we want anyone else in, we can decide about it later."

"All right," said Hilda, "and really I wouldn't be surprised if Lorraine should improve. Why one day this week I saw her smile."

"I saw it too!" exclaimed Clementine; "it was Tuesday, at noon hour. The rest of the girls were almost in hysterics over something or other, and I saw Lorraine break into a small timid little smile. Oh, she'll be merry as a Grig yet!"

CHAPTER XI

EXPERIENCES

As a society the Grigs prospered.

The next meeting was at Clementine's, and was a very busy and merry one. Patty had never been to Clementine's home before, and she was delighted with the large beautiful house, and also with Clementine's mother, who was a sweet-faced, pleasant-mannered lady, and who reminded her a little bit of Aunt Alice.

After the members had all arrived, Clementine took them to a room on the third floor which was her own especial domain.

"We always call it the play-room," she said, "because it was my play-room when I was a little child. Lately I've tried to have them call it studio, or library, or even den; but somehow the old name sticks and we always say—play-room."

The room itself was most attractive, with books, and games, and toys in abundance. In

the middle of the room was a long low table, and the girls gathered about this eager to begin the work they had planned to do. For though only their second meeting, the Grigs had arranged during the week many plans for the furtherance of the ends and aims of their club.

So Clementine had provided scissors and paste, pencils and sewing materials, and soon the work was in progress.

Some made scrap-books, with muslin leaves, while others cut out bright-coloured pictures to paste in these books.

These were intended for the children in a certain nearby hospital.

"Of course," said Editha Hart, "these scrap-books are no novelty. Every girl I've ever known has made muslin scrap-books for hospitals at some time in her life. But these are different, because they're filled with really funny pictures."

"Yes," said Mary Sargent, "I've seen the scrap-books some girls make. The pictures are usually advertising cards, or else stupid old black-and-white things that couldn't amuse anybody. These coloured supplement pictures are certainly funny, if they aren't the very best type of high art."

"If they make the children laugh, our work is accomplished," said Patty.

"What we want to do," said Clementine, "is to make two smiles grow where one grew before."

"Clementine is a walking Literature Class, isn't she?" said Flossy Fisher, admiringly; "we had something like that in the lesson yesterday. But where are the peanuts? Did anyone bring any?"

"Yes, here's a bagful," said Adelaide; "hurry up and get them together, while I make the pig-tails."

Flossy's task was the making of funny little Chinese dolls by stringing peanuts together; while Adelaide braided coarse black thread into little queues for them, and Hilda made fantastic costumes out of Japanese paper napkins.

Editha was engaged in producing wonderful effects, with nothing but sheets of cotton-wadding and a box of water-colour paints. She deftly rolled, tied and draped the material into a comical doll, and then cleverly painted features, hair, hands and dress trimmings, until the whole was a work of art.

"Now, you know," said Hilda, after all the girls had settled down to work, "we're to tell

our experiences during the week, in the way of helping along the gaiety of the nation. Patty Fairfield, what have you done to make somebody else as merry as a Grig?"

"Well," said Patty, apologetically, "I really haven't had many opportunities, though I tried hard to make some. The trouble is, my family and most of my friends are merry, anyhow, and they don't need any chirking up. And of course I couldn't go out into the highways and hedges. But I had one experience which I think will count, and I'll tell you about it. I was going up in the elevator yesterday, and I stood next to a lady, whom I know slightly. Her name is Miss Dennison and she lives in The Wilberforce. She is a writer or something—anyway, she makes speeches at women's conventions or club meetings. Well, she never is very merry-looking, but yesterday she looked cross enough to bite a ten-penny nail into ten pennies. I was almost afraid to get into the elevator for fear she'd snap my head off; and the elevator boy was positively quaking in his boots."

"I know that Miss Dennison," said Adelaide; "she's most awe-inspiring. I think she's a Woman's Rights Suffragist, or whatever you call them."

"Yes, that's the one," said Patty, "and yesterday, although she didn't say anything, I could see at a glance that she was in a terrible temper about something. So it struck me all of a sudden that here was a chance to scatter a little merriment her way, and see if she'd pick it up. So I just said, 'What are you laughing at, Miss Dennison?' and then I began to laugh."

"I don't see how you dared," said Editha. "What did she say?"

"Why, at first she looked at me in amazement, and then, as I was chuckling with laughter, somehow she had to smile, too. And really, girls, when she smiles she looks almost pretty. Well, by that time we had reached our floor, so we both got off and walked along the hall together. 'Laughing!' she said, and she glared at me fearfully; 'indeed I'm not laughing! I'm angry enough to—to——' and she was so angry she couldn't think what she was angry enough to do. The more excited she got, the more I laughed, partly because I wanted to make her laugh, too, and partly because she was so funny. When we reached her apartment she was still blustering and informing me how angry she was, though I had no

idea what it was all about. Then she said: 'Just come in here a minute and I'll show you —and see if you wouldn't be angry, too!' So she took me into her room and there on the bed lay the most beautiful dress you ever saw. It was black lace, with spangles all over it, and twists of orange-coloured velvet here and there. 'Look at that!' she cried, 'look at that!' So I looked at it and I laughed some more, and I said: 'Why, it's a beautiful gown; I don't see anything about that to make you so angry.' And then she said: 'Oh, you don't, don't you? Well, just let me tell you that my dressmaker has just sent it home; and I expected to wear it this evening, when I'm to make an address at a meeting of the Federation. And I can't wear it!' Girls, the tragickness of her face and voice as she said that really made me stop laughing. I said: 'Why not?' in an awe-struck whisper. Then she explained that it didn't fit; it was too long in the waist and too short in the skirt, and too tight in the neck, and too loose in the sleeves; maybe I haven't the details just right, but anyhow everything seemed to be the matter with it. So you see it was a clear case for our society to deal with, and I set to work. First I found out that she really

couldn't wear it, and that she had just come home from the dressmaker's, and the dressmaker had said that it couldn't be refitted for last evening, though it could be done later. So I asked her what other gowns she had to wear, and she showed me heaps of them. So then I just made fun of her; I don't know myself how I dared do it, but I really teased her. I told her that for a woman who was interested in such great subjects as suffragists and things like that, to care what dress she wore was perfectly ridiculous. And I told her that any of those other gowns would do just as well, and she knew it. And I told her that later she could have this new one fixed over and address some other meeting in it. And I joked and giggled, until somehow she really got into a good humour, and said she supposed her heliotrope velvet would do just as well, after all. And when I came away she was awfully nice and she thanked me and said I was a real Mark Tapley. And now, my fellow-Grigs, I hate to confess my ignorance, but can any of you tell me what is a Mark Tapley?"

Hilda Henderson stared at Patty in amazement.

"Do you really mean," she said, "that you

don't know Mark Tapley? Why, he's one of Dickens' characters."

"Well, you see," said Patty, "I never read but three of Dickens' books, and he wasn't in those. What did he do?"

"Why, he's a character in 'Martin Chuzzlewit'; and he's a man who was always jolly under any circumstances. The more depressing the situation, the jollier he grew. He said it was no credit to anybody to be jolly when everything went right; the great feat was to be jolly when things went wrong."

"I like him," said Patty, decidedly; "he was a true Grig; and I'd like to know more of him. I'll tell you what, girls, some time let's read about him aloud at one of our meetings."

"Yes, we will," agreed Hilda; "but I say, Patty, I think your performance with Miss Dennison was fine. If you could make that sour-visaged spinster laugh, you needn't ever be afraid to tackle anybody. Now, Flossy, you come next. What have you been up to this week?"

"My experience isn't as interesting as Patty's," said Flossy; "I tried it on Grandpa. He lives with us, you know, and he has the gout. Sometimes it's worse than others, and

this week he had an awful attack, and, jiminy crickets, if he wasn't cross! Now, generally when he gets rampageous I just keep out of the way; but this time I thought I'd play Grig. So I staid around, and when he burst forth in his angry tantrums I just laughed and said some foolish, funny thing that had nothing to do with the case. I read up the comic papers to get jokes to spring on him, and once or twice I read him funny stories out of the magazines. It didn't always succeed, but lots of times I *did* get him into a better temper, and once he said I made him forget the pain entirely."

"That's a very nice experience, Flossy, and I think you were lovely," said Clementine, in her impulsive way; "I really believe our society is going to do good in the world as well as other missionaries. Now I'll tell what I did. There's nobody in our house that's cross, except the cook; and she is a terror. Why, positively, mamma doesn't dare cross her the least bit. She's not only quick-tempered and has a habit of flying into fearful rages, but she's sullen and ill-natured right along. Well, a few nights ago mamma was giving a dinner-party and she wanted awfully to give Nora some directions how to do some things. But she knew Nora

wanted to do them another way, and she just didn't dare tell her to change."

"I wouldn't have such a cook as that!" exclaimed Adelaide, indignantly.

"Yes, you would," said Clementine, "if she was perfect every other way. Mamma puts up with her temper because she's such a good servant. Well, anyhow, I went down into the kitchen that morning and cracked a few jokes with Nora, and she has the real Irish sense of humour, so I got her laughing until she was for the time being in a good-natured, amiable frame of mind. Then I ran upstairs and told mamma that if she went down quick, before the effects wore off, I believed she could make Nora do anything she wanted her to. And, sure enough, Nora was still smiling when mamma went down, and she took the orders as meek as a lamb, and mamma was so pleased."

"You're all right, Clementine," said Editha; "but you see we've lived in The Wilberforce and we don't have any servants of our own, and of course we can't joke and giggle with the hotel servants. So Adelaide and I thought we'd try it on Jeannette, because she certainly is a cross child. And then somehow that seemed sort of mean, for quite often Adelaide and I are cross,

too. We don't mean anything, but we just snip each other, and the other snaps back, and it isn't very nice. So all three of us decided to jolly each other, and now whenever one of us says anything cross, the other two begin to giggle, and first thing we know we're all laughing."

"Good for you, girls!" cried Patty, clapping her hands; "I've always said the Harts were the nicest girls I know, except that they were so snippy toward each other. Goodness me! I believe this society is going to make angels of us all. Now, Mary Sargent, it's your turn. What's your thrilling tale?"

"It isn't very thrilling," said Mary, "but it's the best I could do. You see we live in an apartment hotel, too, and I haven't anybody that needs cheering up. But one day I noticed that the chambermaid was a most sad and forlorn-looking individual. So when she comes into the rooms mornings now I laugh and joke with her a little, and it seems to do her good. She's pleasanter in every way and even if she comes in glum she always goes out smiling. She's a Swede, or something like that, and I can't always understand what she says, but the other day I gave her a calendar I had with

funny pictures on it, and to-day she told me that she looks over the whole twelve every morning and then when she thinks of them through the day it makes her laugh."

"That's a rudimentary sense of humour," said Clementine, laughing, "but it seems to be a step in the right direction. Let the good work go on, Mary; I thought you'd take it more seriously than the rest of us and very likely you'll accomplish the most."

Mary Sargent was a shy girl and she blushed at Clementine's praise, but her eyes twinkled with humour, and Clementine said she was a dear and the very merriest Grig of them all.

CHAPTER XII

A VISIT TO THE HOSPITAL

"WELL," said Hilda, "I'm not sure that I ought to be president of the Grigs, after all, for I have to confess that I couldn't find anybody to make fun for except our old cat. But if you could see her, I'm sure you'd agree that she's a worthy object. She's so old that she's both blind and deaf; and she's so melancholy that it's enough to make you weep to look at her. I amused her and played with her and tried to make her think she was a kitten again; but it was no go, and I finally had to resort to one of those patent catnip-balls. That worked like a charm, and in a few moments she was rolling around in glee and cutting up all sorts of antics. So you see what perseverance will accomplish."

"Far be it from me," said Patty, "to criticise the deeds of our worthy president; and I suppose cats want some fun in their lives as well as people."

"They ought to have nine times as much," said Hilda, "for they have nine lives and we have only one."

"I've nothing more to say," said Patty; "our president has quite justified herself, and her effort was nine times as meritorious as any of ours."

"Well, I think the whole thing is fun," said Clementine, "and next week I mean to do something startling. I think I'll go and call on our minister. He is the solemnest man I know and I'd just like to see if he *could* laugh. I'll take 'Alice In Wonderland,' and read aloud to him, and see if I can make him smile."

"Lewis Carroll was a clergyman himself," said Hilda; "so probably your minister is familiar with his works."

"Probably he isn't," returned Clementine; "you don't know our minister. I don't believe he ever read anything more frivolous than 'Foxe's Book of Martyrs' or the 'Lamentations of Jeremiah.'"

"Then do go," said Flossy, "and I'll go with you. It would take two of us to make a man like that smile. But I've finished this scrapbook, and my! but it's a pretty one. Observe those yellow daffodils on the cover and the lion

under them. That's a most humorous decoration, besides being artistically beautiful."

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed Editha, looking at the book Flossy held up so proudly. "It's enough to make a cat laugh!"

"Then I'll send it home to Hilda's cat," said Flossy quickly; "it may help to brighten one of her nine sad lives."

By this time it was nearly noon, and though they had enjoyed the work, the girls were nevertheless pleased when they saw a maid come in at the door with a large tray which held seven cups of cocoa and piled-up plates of sandwiches.

"Do you know that tray makes me laugh more than these scrap-books, with all their side-splitting pictures," said Clementine.

"Yes, it's the merriest thing I've seen this morning," said Adelaide; "it really puts me in quite a good humour; I wouldn't even be cross with Editha just now."

The Grigs did full justice to Mrs. Morse's hospitality, and then that lady herself came into the play-room.

She was most enthusiastic over the girls' morning work and quite agreed that they were true missionaries in their chosen field.

"And now," she said, "I have an omnibus at the door and if you'll all bundle into it I'll take you around to the hospital; for the matron telephoned that we might come to-day between twelve and one o'clock. I have been hunting up a lot of comic papers and humorous books to take along; and I have some flowers, too, for there are some people who are too ill to read, but who can be cheered by fresh blossoms."

Patty looked admiringly at Mrs. Morse, who was a lady after her own heart, and more than ever she felt reminded of Aunt Alice.

The girls gathered up their scrap-books and dolls and toys and found to their delight that they had a large basketful.

Downstairs they went, donned their hats and coats and started for the hospital.

The big roomy vehicle held the eight easily, and they laughed and chattered in a fashion quite suited to their avowed character.

Mrs. Morse had explained the situation to Miss Bidwell, the hospital matron, and that good lady was pleased to see the seven merry Grigs.

Cautioning them to be quiet while going through the halls, she led them to the conva-

lescent ward, where a score or more wan-faced children looked at them wonderingly.

The girls had arranged their programme beforehand. Standing in the middle of the room, where all the little patients could see her, Flossy recited some funny poetry. Her happy, smiling face and her comical words and gestures proved quite as amusing as the girls had hoped, and the little sick children laughed aloud in glee.

Then Clementine sang some nonsense-songs, and after that Hilda told a funny story. Hilda was a born mimic and her representation of the different characters pleased the children greatly.

After this the girls went around separately to the various little cots, and talked to the invalids personally. There were so many of the children that in order not to neglect any, the interview was necessarily short with each one. But there was time for a little merry conversation with each, besides presenting the gifts they had brought.

Patty was particularly attracted by a little boy about eight years old, who had broken his leg. The little fellow's face was white and drawn with suffering, and his sad eyes made him seem far older than he really was. Instinctively, Patty

made up her mind to bring all the pleasure and merriment into that child's life that she possibly could; and just because he seemed to be the forlornest specimen of humanity present, she resolved to make him her special charge. His name, he said, was Tommy Skelling, and his leg had been broken in a trolley accident. But it was a compound fracture, and caused the boy almost continuous pain and suffering. It seemed especially pathetic even to try to make the little chap laugh, but Patty felt sure that diversion would do him more good than sympathy. So she told him the funniest story she knew, and picked out the funniest scrap-book for him. She was rewarded by finding him very appreciative, and succeeded in making him forget his pain for the moment, and laugh heartily at her fun.

As the girls were taking leave Tommy confided to Patty his opinion of the club.

"You're the nicest one," he said, "but," pointing a skinny little finger at Flossy, "she's the prettiest. And she," indicating Clementine in the same way, "she's the grandest; but she's nice. You're all nice, and I hope you'll come again soon, and I wish I could have one of those peanut doll-babies."

Luckily, there was an extra doll left, and it was given to Tommy, who laughed outright at the grotesque toy.

"Well, that performance was certainly a screaming success," said Adelaide, as they were all in the omnibus going home.

"It was, indeed," said Mrs. Morse, "and I think you girls are to be congratulated on your good work."

"Somehow, it just happened," said Patty; "we began this society more with the idea of having fun ourselves, and now the main object seems to be to make fun for others."

"I think we can do both," said Flossy, "and next week I want you all to come to my house, and not bring any work. We can make scrap-books and things at some meetings, but next time we're just going to play."

"That's all right," said Hilda, suddenly assuming her presidential air. "Of course we're not going to work at every meeting. But remember, through the week we're to scatter all the fun we can, and liven up the world in general. And I'll try to find somebody besides a cat next time."

Mrs. Morse and Clementine went around with the girls, and left each one at her home.

Patty went flying in to her own apartment in quest of Grandma.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "we had a perfectly lovely meeting, and Mrs. Morse is a dear! She took us to the hospital in an omnibus, and we made all the little sick children laugh, and they enjoyed it ever so much, and so did we. I wish papa would come home; I want to tell him all about it."

"He isn't coming home to-day," said Grandma Elliott, smiling at the excited appearance of her young charge; "you'll have to wait until Monday before you can tell him."

"Oh," cried Patty, "he's gone to Philadelphia! to see Nan! How do you know?"

"Yes," said Grandma, "he has gone to Philadelphia, to stay over Sunday. He telephoned up from the office this morning, and then he came up for a few moments about noon. And he said for you and me to go out to Vernondale this afternoon, and stay until Monday, too."

"Oh, goody!" cried Patty, clapping her hands; "I'm just perfectly crazy to see Marian, and all of them. Can't we go right away, Grandma?"

"Well, we'll go soon after luncheon. At any rate, we'll get there by dinner-time."

"Oh, no, Grandma, let's go earlier, so I'll get there in time to go to the Tea Club meeting. They'll be so surprised to see me, and I can tell them all about the Grigs. It will be such fun!"

"Very well, then; go and brush your hair and make yourself tidy, and we'll go right down to luncheon now. Then, if we're spry, we can easily reach Vernondale by half-past three or four o'clock."

"That will be lovely," cried Patty, as she danced away to her room; "what a dear, good Grandma you are!"

They were spry, and were fortunate enough to catch a fast train, so that by four o'clock they were at Aunt Alice's.

Marian had gone to the Tea Club, which met that day at Elsie Morris's, and after waiting only for a few words with Aunt Alice and the little children, Patty flew over to Elsie's.

Such a hullabaloo as greeted her arrival! As Patty said afterwards, the girls couldn't have made more fuss over her if she had been Queen of the Cannibal Islands.

"I'm *so* glad you came," said Ethel Holmes, for the dozenth time, as she hovered around Patty; "now tell us every single thing you've done since you've been in New York. Are the

girls nice? How do you like your school? Do you belong to a Tea Club? How do you like your hotel? Don't you miss us girls?"

"Do wait a minute, Ethel," cried Patty, laughing, "before you go any further. That is, if you want your questions answered. I guess I'll answer the last one first. Of course I miss you girls awfully. Not but what the girls there are nice enough, but I want you, too. I wish you'd all come and live in New York."

Marian said very little, but sat and held Patty's hand, as if afraid she might run away. Marian was devotedly attached to her cousin, and missed her more than anybody had any idea of, excepting Aunt Alice.

"But tell us about it all," said Polly Stevens; "do you go to the theatre every night?"

"Goodness, no!" exclaimed Patty; "of course not. I don't go at all, except when papa took me to a matinée once, and he says I may go two or three more times during the winter. No, Ethel, we don't have a Tea Club, but we have a club called the Grigs."

"What a crazy name!" exclaimed Elsie; "what does it mean?"

So Patty explained all about the Grigs, and their aims, and their work, and play.

"I think it's lovely," said Polly Stevens, "and I do think you have beautiful times. Just think of your all going to the hospital together in an ambulance."

"I didn't say ambulance, Polly, I said omnibus," said Patty, as the girls went off into shrieks of laughter.

"Well, it's all the same," said Polly, quite unabashed; "you all went together in some big vehicle, and I think that's fun."

"It was fun," said Patty; "and it was lovely to see the poor little sick children brighten up and laugh merrily, in spite of their pain and illness."

"I think, girls," said Marian, "that it would be nice for the Tea Club to make some scrapbooks and dolls and things, and send them in to the Grigs for them to take to the hospital."

"Marian, you're a darling," said Patty, affectionately squeezing her cousin's hand; "it will be perfectly lovely if you only would, for we can use any amount of those things, and you would be doing such a lot of good to those poor little children."

And thus the good influence and helpful work of the Grigs was widened in a manner quite unexpected.

CHAPTER XIII

ELISE

IN order that Patty might get home in time for school on Monday morning, she and Grandma were obliged to take a very early train from Vernondale.

So Marian and Frank went down with them to see them safely on the half-past seven train, and Brownie, the dog, accompanied them.

As usual, Marian was loath to let Patty go, and clung to her until the last minute.

Frank had already established Grandma in the train, and the conductor was about to ring the bell when, at the last minute, Patty jumped on.

The train was almost starting, but the conductor assisted Patty, and she seated herself beside Grandma, quite out of breath from her hasty entrance.

" I just hated to leave Marian," she said, " for she did seem so sorry to have me go. But I promised to come back here to spend Thanks-

giving, or else to have her spend it with me in New York, and that seemed to help matters a little."

"You'd better have her plan to come to see you," said Grandma, "for I think your father expects that Nan will be in New York about that time."

"All right," said Patty; "I don't care as long as Marian and I are together. But for goodness' sake, Grandma, will you look at that!"

Now "that" was nothing more nor less than Brownie, the dog, sitting in the aisle, blinking at them and contentedly wagging his tail.

"How did he get there?" said Grandma, with a bewildered, helpless air.

"I don't know," said Patty, laughing, "but there he is, and now the question is, what shall we do with him?"

Brownie seemed intelligently interested in this question, and continued to wag his tail and blink at Patty with an expression on his funny old dog face that was very like a wink.

"Marian will be worried to death," said Grandma, with an air of consternation.

"Of course she will," assented Patty, cheer-

fully, "but that isn't the worst of it. The thing is, what are we to do with him now? You know they don't allow dogs on the train."

"I never thought of that," said Grandma, helplessly; "will he have to go in the baggage-car?"

"There isn't any baggage-car on this train. We'll either have to throw him out of the window or hide him."

"All right; we'll hide him," and Grandma coaxed Brownie to jump up into her lap. Then she pulled her travelling-cloak over him, until he was entirely concealed from view.

But the inquisitive conductor insisted on knowing what had become of the dog that followed these particular ladies on the train.

"He's here," exclaimed Grandma, throwing open her cloak and showing the quivering animal.

"He must be put off," said the conductor, sternly; we do not want dogs on the train."

"All right," said Patty, cheerfully; "neither do we. And the sooner you put him off, and us with him, the better it will be all around. For you see, Grandma," she went on, "we've got to take Brownie back to Vernondale.

Marian will have four thousand fits if we don't, and, besides, we couldn't possibly take him to The Wilberforce."

Grandma said nothing; the emergency was too much for her to cope with, and she was glad to depend on Patty's advice.

So Patty said to the conductor: "Please put us off just as soon as you can, for we have to take this dog back to Vernondale."

But with the characteristic perversity of conductors, he said, "No stop, Miss, until Elizabeth. You can get off there—all of you."

This was nearly half way to New York City, but there was no other way out of it, so, as Patty cheerfully remarked to Grandma, they might as well make up their minds to get off at Elizabeth and take Brownie back to Vernondale.

"Of course," Patty went on, "I shall be late to school, and I'll lose a mark, and that'll throw Clementine ahead of me in the count, for we have been just even up to now; but I can't help it; Marian's dog must be taken home, and that's all there is about that."

Although Grandma Elliott regretted the necessity of Patty's losing a mark, for she well knew how the child was striving for the grand

prize, yet she appreciated and admired the philosophy which made the best of inevitable circumstances, and she agreed with Patty that there was nothing else to do.

So at Elizabeth they got off of the train, and with some difficulty persuaded Brownie to get off, too.

At this station it was necessary to cross under the elevated tracks to take the train in the opposite direction. Brownie, being ignorant of the imperative necessities of travel, objected to this, and it was only after some coaxing that Patty persuaded him to accompany them.

Meantime there was consternation at the Vernondale end of the route. After the seven-thirty train had left the station, Frank and Marian suddenly realised that since they could see Brownie nowhere around he must have gone on the train with Patty.

"What will they do?" queried Marian; "they can't take him to New York, and I know they won't abandon him, so of course they'll turn around and bring him back on the next train."

"Of course they will," assented Frank; "but, let me see, the next train back doesn't leave Elizabeth until eight-ten; now, if I take the

seven-forty I can head them off, and they won't have to come back."

"That's a great scheme," said Marian; "go ahead! and I will wait here until you come back."

So Frank took the next train, but as it chanced to be behind time, he reached Elizabeth just as the returning train was pulling out of the station, with Patty on board.

Expecting some such complication, Patty stood on the platform, and waved her hand to Frank, whom she saw on the incoming train.

"Brownie's all right," she cried, "but we'll have to go back, now we're started."

"Yes, I suppose so," Frank called back, realising that his journey had been for nought.

So Patty and Grandma and the dog whizzed into the Vernondale station and alighted to find Marian tearful and almost in hysterics.

"I'm so glad to see you," she said, "and I'm so glad to see Brownie, and Frank has gone to Elizabeth, and Patty, won't you be late to school, and did you ever know such a performance?"

Brownie flew around like mad, and wagged his tail as if he quite understood that he was the hero of the occasion, and then Patty and

Grandma took the next train to New York City, and Marian was careful that Brownie should not accompany them this time.

And so that's how it happened that Patty was late to school for the first time, and that one mark put Clementine ahead of her in the monthly report.

But, as Patty told her father, she couldn't help the dog jumping on the train, and Mr. Fairfield agreed that that was quite true.

When Patty finally did reach school that Monday morning she saw that a new pupil had arrived.

This girl, as Patty first noticed her in the Literature Class, was exceedingly pretty, with large dark eyes and curly dark hair, and a general air of daring and self-assurance.

Somehow Patty felt that she didn't quite approve of her, and yet at the same time she felt fascinated and mysteriously attracted toward the stranger.

It was not until the noon hour that she learned that the new girl's name was Elise Farrington.

None of the girls seemed inclined to talk to the newcomer, and Patty, with a vivid realisation of her own feelings the first day of her arrival at the Oliphant school, determined to

do all she could toward making the new arrival feel at home.

So, at noon-time she went to her and said: "They tell me you are Elise Farrington, and that this is your first day at the Oliphant school. I well remember my first day, and so I want to say to you that if I can do anything for you, or introduce you to anybody that you'd care to know, I shall be very glad to do so."

Elise looked at Patty gratefully.

"You're awfully good," she said, "but truly there's nobody I had any especial desire to be introduced to, except you. So suppose you introduce yourself."

Patty laughed. "I'm Patty Fairfield," she said; "but I'm not especially desirable to know. Let me introduce you to some of the other girls."

"No," said Elise, "you're the one I picked out in the classroom as the only one I thought I should really like. Have you any especial chum?"

"Why, not exactly," said Patty, smiling; "I'm chums with everybody. But I'll tell you what: you're new to-day, and of course you feel a little strange. Now it happens that the girl who usually sits next to me at luncheon isn't

here, so you come and sit by me, and then you'll get a good start."

Patty remembered how glad she would have been had someone talked to her like that on the first day of her arrival at the school, and she put Elise in Lorraine's place, glad that she could so favour her.

During luncheon Patty entertained the new pupil with an account of her funny experience with Brownie that morning, and she found in Elise an appreciative listener to her recital.

At the same time, Patty could not quite make up her mind as to the social status of the new girl.

Elise seemed to be of the wealthy and somewhat supercilious class typified in the Oliphant school by Gertrude Lyons and Maude Carleton.

And yet Elise seemed far more simple and natural than those artificial young women, and Patty concluded that in spite of the fact that she belonged to one of New York's best-known families she was unostentatious, and in no sense "stuck-up."

For with all her sophistication and general effect of affluence, Patty seemed to see an undercurrent of dissatisfaction of some sort.

Not that Elise was sad, or low-spirited. Far

from it, she was merry, frivolous, and quite inclined to make fun of her fellow-pupils.

"Did you ever see anything so ridiculous as Gertrude Lyons?" she asked of Patty. "She is so airy and conceited, and yet she's nothing after all."

Although Patty did not especially like Gertrude, this challenge roused her sense of justice, and she said: "Oh, Gertrude is all right; and I don't think it is nice to criticise strangers like that."

"Gertrude's no stranger to me," said Elise; "I've known her all my life. They live within a block of us, but we never have liked each other. I like you a lot better."

Although Patty was gratified by this frank appreciation of herself, she didn't quite understand Elise, for she seemed such a peculiar combination of flattery and cynicism.

After luncheon was over Patty introduced her to the other Grigs. The description of the society and its intents seemed to appeal especially to Elise, and she exclaimed: "Oh, let me join it, let me be a Grig, and we can meet in the Casino and have no end of fun."

"What Casino?" asked Patty; "what do you mean?"

"Why," explained Elise, "we have a private Casino of our own, you know. It's right next door to our house, and connects on every floor."

"But what is it?" asked Clementine; "I don't understand."

"Why, it's just another house; father bought it, you know, and then fixed it up for us all to have all sorts of fun in. There's a tennis-court, and a squash-court, and a bowling alley, and all sorts of sports and games. Oh, just come to see it, that's all, and you'll understand better than I can tell you."

"Of course we'll come," said Clementine, who was always the pioneer. "When can we come?"

"Why, Thursday is my day," said Elise; "you see there are five of us children, and we each have the Casino on a given day, and may invite whom we like. In the evenings, my father and mother invite their friends."

"I think it's the loveliest scheme I ever heard of," said Patty; "and I'm sure we'd all love to come on Thursday. But as to making you a Grig, I'm not so sure. Are you always merry?"

"Merry? I should say I am. Why the family say I never stop giggling. Oh, goodness gracious! I'm merry enough; the trouble is to

make me serious when occasion really demands it. Why, I'm always at the very topnotch of hilarity."

"It seems to me," said Hilda, falling into her presidential attitude, "that we might let Elise be the eighth Grig, until Lorraine is ready to join. And she certainly isn't, yet."

"She certainly is not," said Patty, as she remembered Lorraine's cross greeting that morning, "and I think your idea is all right."

CHAPTER XIV

THE CASINO

ON the whole, Elise wore rather well. Although belonging to the millionaire classes of the city, she was simple and unaffected, and never referred to her wealth by word or implication. From the first she was devoted to Patty, and in spite of her many peculiarities Patty thoroughly liked her. Clementine considered her cranky and Adelaide thought her too much inclined to dictate. But Elise was entirely indifferent to their opinions, and independently followed her own sweet will. If she wanted things done a certain way, she said so, and somehow they were done that way. If the other girls objected, she quietly ignored their objections and proceeded serenely on her course. The result of this was that the others regarded her with mingled dissatisfaction and admiration, neither of which at all affected Elise.

She made one exception of Patty. She was always willing to defer to Patty's wishes, or

change her plans in accordance with Patty's ideas.

Still, as Elise was so good-natured, generous and entertaining, the girls really liked her, and she proved to be a real acquisition to the society of Grigs.

On Thursday afternoon she invited them all to go home with her and play in the Casino.

The girls went directly from school, and a short walk brought them to Elise's home.

The Farrington house was really a mansion, and by far the most magnificent and imposing dwelling that Patty had ever been in. The eight girls ran up the steps and the door was opened by a footman in livery. The great hall seemed to Patty like a glimpse into fairy-land. Its massive staircase wound around in a bewildering way, and beautiful palms and statues stood all about. The light fell softly through stained-glass windows, and to Patty's beauty-loving soul it all seemed a perfect Elysium of form and colour.

She almost held her breath as she looked, but Elise seemed to take it as a matter of course, and said, "Come on into the library, girls, and leave your books and things."

The library was another revelation of art and

beauty, and Patty wondered if the other girls were as much impressed as herself by Elise's home. It was not only that unlimited wealth had been used in the building and furnishing, but somebody's exquisite and educated taste had directed the expenditure; and it was this that appealed so strongly to Patty, though she did not herself understand it.

There was another occupant of the library, whom Elise presented as her brother Roger. He was a boy of about nineteen, with dark hair and eyes, like his sister's, and a kind, frank face. He greeted the girls pleasantly, without a trace of awkardness, but after a few casual remarks he turned aside from the laughing group and stared moodily out of the window.

"Poor old Roger," said Elise to Patty, in a low voice, "he's in a most awful fit of the blues. Do go and say a few cheering words to him, there's a good Grig."

Always ready to cast a ray of sunshine into anybody's life, Patty went toward the disconsolate-looking boy.

"How can you look so sad?" she said, "with a whole room full of merry Grigs?"

"Because I'm not a Grig, I suppose," said Roger. He spoke politely enough, but seemed

not at all anxious to pursue the conversation. But Patty was not so easily daunted.

"Of course, you can't be a member of our society," she said, "but couldn't you be just a little bit griggy on your own account?"

"My own account doesn't call for grigginess just at present."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I have troubles of my own."

"All the more reason for being merry. How do you expect to get the better of your troubles if you don't have fun with them?"

Roger looked at her with a little more interest.

"The trouble that's bothering me hasn't come yet," he said; "it's only an anticipation now."

"Then perhaps it never will come, and you might as well be merry and take your chances."

"No, it's bound to come, and there's nothing merry about it; it's just horrid!"

"Won't you tell me what it is?" said Patty, gently, seeing that the boy was very much in earnest.

"Would you really like to know?"

"Yes, indeed; perhaps I could help you."

Roger smiled. "No," he said, "you can't help me; nobody can help me. It's only this: I've got to have my arm broken."

"What?" exclaimed Patty, looking at the stalwart youth in amazement. "Who's going to break it?"

"I don't know whether to go to the circus, and let a lion break it, or whether to fall out of an automobile," and Roger smiled quizzically at Patty's bewildered face.

"Oh, you're only fooling," she said, with a look of relief; "I thought you were in earnest."

"And so I am," said Roger, more seriously. "This is the truth: I broke my arm playing football, a year ago, and when it was set it didn't knit right, or it wasn't set right, or something, and now I can't bend my elbow at all." Roger raised his right arm and showed that he was unable to bend it at the elbow-joint. "It's awfully inconvenient and awkward, as you see; and the only remedy is to have it broken and set over again, and so that's the proposition I'm up against."

"And a mighty hard one, too," said Patty with a sudden rush of genuine sympathy. "Are you going to the hospital?"

"Yes; mother wants it done at home—thinks I could be more comfortable, and all that. But I'd rather go to the hospital; it's more satisfactory in every way. But it will be a long

siege. Now, Miss Grig, do you see anything particularly merry in the outlook?"

"Will the breaking part hurt?" asked Patty.

"No, I shall probably be unconscious during the smash. But what I dread is lying still for several weeks bound up in splints. And I can't play in the game this season."

"You couldn't, anyway, if you didn't have it broken, could you?"

"No, of course not."

"And you never can play football again if you don't have it broken and reset?"

"No."

"Well, then, the outlook is decidedly merry. The idea of your objecting to the inconveniences of three or four weeks, when it means a lifetime of comfort and convenience afterwards."

"Whew! I never looked at it in just that light before, but I more than half believe you're right."

"Of course I'm right," said Patty, stoutly. "You've got to look at things in their true proportion. And the proportion of a few weeks in the hospital against a good arm for the rest of your life is very small, I can tell you. Especially as you will have the best possible

skill and care, and every comfort and luxury that can be procured. Suppose you were poor, and had to go to some free hospital, and have inexperienced doctors practising on you! Why, you might have to have your arm broken and set a dozen times before they got it right."

"Well, there is something in that, and I begin to believe my case is merrier than it might be. At any rate, Miss Grig, you've cheered me up a lot, and I'm duly grateful. I leave home to-morrow for the merry, merry hospital, so I can only hope that when next we meet I can raise my arm and shake hands with you a little more gracefully than this."

Roger put out his stiff arm with an awkward gesture, but with such a pleasant smile that Patty shook hands heartily and said: "I hope you will; and until then promise me that you'll be as merry as a Grig would be under similar circumstances."

"I'll promise to try," said Roger, and then Elise carried the girls all off to the Casino.

Though not so elaborately furnished as the Farrington home, the Casino was perfect in its own way. On the first floor, which they entered by a door from the main hall of the Farrington house, was a large tennis court, and

in the apartment next to that a squash court. It seemed strange to see these courts in-doors, but Elise told the girls that after they had tried them, she felt sure they would like them quite as well as out-of-door courts.

"At any rate," she said, "they are the best possible substitute."

On the floor above was a long bowling alley, a billiard-room and a bewildering succession of other rooms, some fitted up with paraphernalia of which Patty did not even know the use.

But she was greatly impressed with the kindness of a father who would fit out such a wonderful place of delightful recreation for his children.

"It isn't only for us," said Elise, as Patty expressed her thoughts aloud; "father and mother use it to entertain their friends in the evenings. There is a card-room and a smoking-room, and up at the top a big ball-room. But of course we children just use these lower floor rooms for our games and things. Now, shall we have the meeting first, I mean the regular society meeting, or play games first and meet afterwards?"

"Let's play first," said Patty, "because we mightn't have time for both."

This was unanimously agreed to and soon the Grigs were quite living up to their name, as they played various games.

Patty, Elise, Hilda and Editha played tennis at first and afterwards played basketball, while the others took the tennis court.

After an hour or more of this vigorous exercise they were quite ready to sit down and rest, and Elise said, "Now we will all go and sit in the hall and have our meeting."

This hall was a large square apartment on the second floor. There was an immense open fireplace, where great logs were cheerfully blazing; and on either side were quaint, old-fashioned settles, large and roomy, and on these the girls ranged themselves.

"This is the nicest society," said Clementine, "because we don't have to do anything at any particular time. Now here we are holding a meeting on Thursday, when Saturday is our regular day. But I don't see any reason why we shouldn't meet any day that happens to suit us."

"I think so, too," said Hilda; "we haven't any rules and we don't want any. Has anybody any plans for next week?"

"I have a plan," said Elise, "though I'm not

sure we can arrange it for next week. But some day I think it would be nice for us to collect a lot of small children who don't have much fun in their lives, and bring them here for a morning or an afternoon in the Casino and just let them romp and play all they like."

"That's a beautiful plan, Elise," said Patty, her eyes shining; "and you're a dear to think of it. Is your mother willing?"

"Yes," said Elise; "she wasn't awfully anxious to let me do it at first, but I coaxed her to and father was willing, so he helped me coax."

Just here Roger appeared, carrying a large box of candy.

"Hope I don't intrude," he said, in his graceful, boyish way; "and I won't stay a minute. But I thought that perhaps even merry Grigs could at times descend to prosaic chocolates."

"I should say we could!" exclaimed Clementine; "really I don't know anything merrier than a box of candy."

"You're a perfect duck, Roger, to bring it," said Elise; "but you must run away now, for we can't have boys at Grig meetings. There's nothing merry about a boy."

"All the more reason then," said Roger, "why I should stay and be merryfied."

"No, you can't," said his sister, "so go away now and please send mother here. She said she'd come and meet the girls, so tell her now's her chance."

With comical expressions of unwillingness, Roger went away and in a few moments Mrs. Farrington came.

She was an ultra-fashionable lady and reminded Patty a little of Aunt Isabel St. Clair. But though elaborately dressed, her gown was in far better taste than Aunt Isabel's gorgeous raiment, and though her manner was a little conventional, her voice was low and sweet and her smile was charming.

She did not talk to the girls individually, but greeted them as a whole, and welcomed them prettily as friends of her daughter.

Then she presented each one with a beautiful little pin made of green enamel in the design of a cricket.

"It is a real English cricket, or grig," she said, "and I instructed the jeweller to make it a merry one."

Her orders had been carried out, for the little green grigs were jolly looking affairs, with tiny

eyes of yellow topaz that fairly seemed to wink and blink with fun. The girls were delighted and all agreed that Mrs. Farrington had conferred the highest possible honour on the society of Grigs.

CHAPTER XV

A PLEASANT SATURDAY

AT half-past five Mrs. Farrington sent the girls home in her carriage. The four who lived farthest were sent first and this left the two Hart girls and Patty to wait for the second trip.

They had returned to the Farrington house and were waiting in the library. Roger was there, and also two of Elise's younger sisters. Patty was glad to see more of the Farrington family and chatted pleasantly with the little girls. But before she went away Roger found an opportunity to speak to her again.

"I say, you know," he began, "I don't know just how to express it, but I want to thank you for the way you talked to me. It wasn't so much what you said, but that brave, plucky kind of talk does brace a fellow up wonderfully and I'm no end obliged to you."

"You're more than welcome, I'm sure," said Patty, smiling; "but I didn't say anything

worth while. I wish I could really help you, but if you'll just look on the bright side, you know you can help yourself a whole lot."

"You help other poor little boys in hospitals," said Roger; "you go to see Tommy Skelling."

"Well, I can't go to see you," said Patty, laughing; "but I'll tell you what I will do; I'll make a scrap-book for you, or a peanut doll, whichever you'd rather have."

"I think I'll take the scrap-book," said Roger, with the air of one making an important decision. "You see I might be tempted to eat up the peanut doll."

"That's so; well, I'll promise to make you a nice little scrap-book and send it to you next week. And I hope you'll get along all right, and, honestly, I think you will."

"I think so, too," said Roger, cheerfully; and then the carriage returned and Patty went home.

That evening she told her father all about the Farringtons.

"It was so funny, papa," she said, "to be visiting in one of those grand millionaire houses. Why, it's like those that are pictured in the magazines, you know. And I thought that those people were always ostentatious and

purse-proud and generally snippy to us poorer classes. But the Farringtons aren't that way a bit. They're refined and gentle and awfully kind. They have some queer ways, and somehow they seem a little discontented—not entirely happy, you know—but very pleasant and sweet to us girls. But aren't Elise's parents good to her to give her all that pleasure? The Casino, I mean."

"The Casino is truly a splendid thing," said Mr. Fairfield, "but do you think it necessarily shows that Mr. and Mrs. Farrington are more fond of their children than other people are?"

Patty thought a while, quite seriously; then she said: "I believe I see what you mean. You mean that Mr. Farrington is fond of his children, just as other fathers are; but that he happens to have money enough to give them bigger things. Because I know, Papa Fairfield, that if you had millions of dollars, you'd be plenty fond enough of me to give me a dozen Casinos, wouldn't you?"

"Two dozen, if you wanted them, Puss, and if I could afford them. Yes, that's what I mean, Patty, and it's the old question of proportion. From what I know in a general way of Mr. Farrington and from what you tell me of

their home life, I believe they have a good sense of proportion and are consequently people who are pleasant to know. But, my child, you must look out for your own sense of proportion. Remember Elise is a rich girl and lives in luxury, but you are not; and while we are in fairly comfortable circumstances, I want you to realise the difference and not feel envious of her, or discontented because you can't live as she does."

"Indeed I don't, papa; I'm not quite such a goose as that, as you ought to know by this time. But I do like to visit there and I enjoy the lovely house and the beautiful pictures and things."

"That's all right, Patty girl, if you like Elise, too. But I don't want you to cultivate anybody just for the sake of their beautiful home and pleasant entertainment."

"I do like Elise, papa, very much; she's a peculiar girl and I don't think I quite understand her yet. But there's a good deal to her and the more I see of her the better I like her. She has invited me to lunch there on Saturday, and afterwards go to a matinée with her. The French governess will take us, and Mrs. Farrington told Elise she might ask me. May I go, papa?"

"Why, yes, child, I don't see any reason why you shouldn't. I want you to have all the good times that it's right for a little girl to have. What is the matinee?"

"I forget the name of it, but it's one of those 'Humpty Dumpty' sort of shows, with fairies and wonderful scenes. Elise says it was brought over from London, and it's something like what they call a Christmas pantomime over there."

"That's all right, Chicken; you may go, and I hope you'll have a beautiful time. And then some day you must invite Elise here to luncheon and I'll take you both to a show."

"Oh, papa, that will be lovely! How good you are to me. I haven't seen Mr. Farrington yet, but I'm sure he isn't a quarter as handsome as you are, if he *is* twice as rich."

"He's probably a hundred times as rich," said Mr. Fairfield, laughing, "and twice as handsome."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Patty, smiling at her father, "and Nan wouldn't, either."

"I don't believe she would. Between you two flatterers I run a fair chance of being completely spoiled."

"When shall I see Nan?" asked Patty; "isn't she coming to New York this winter?"

"Yes, after the holidays she and Mrs. Allen are coming to town for a month or so."

"Lovely! where will they be? At The Wilberforce?"

"No, they will stay at a hotel farther uptown, where Mrs. Allen's sister lives."

"I'll be awfully glad to see Nan again; and the girls will all like her, too, I'm sure. Papa, do you know, I think I have a very lovely lot of friends, counting you, and Nan, and Grandma, and all the Grigs."

"And Kenneth?"

"Oh, yes; if you count boys, Kenneth and Clifford Morse and now Roger Farrington. He's an awfully nice boy, papa."

"Yes, I think so, Puss, from what you told me about him; and I'm sorry for the poor chap. You must make a first-class scrap-book for him, Patty; make it real interesting, you know; with pictures that a boy would like and really funny jokes and little stories. And some evening when Hepworth is up here we'll get him to make some funny sketches for it and design a cover."

"Gay!" cried Patty, "that's the very thing!

Mr. Hepworth's comic sketches are too funny for anything. And, papa, he's another good friend, isn't he? I forgot him. Don't you think I'm particularly blessed in my friends, papa?"

"I think you are a blessed little girl and have a happy and contented disposition. And you'll find out in the long run that that is better than wealth or high social position."

On Saturday Patty went to Elise's for luncheon. The Farrington carriage came for her and a maid was sent to accompany her.

Although without a shade of envy in her mind, Patty thoroughly enjoyed the ride in the luxurious carriage, with a smart and imposing coachman and footman and the trim little French maid beside her.

"I'm afraid," she thought to herself, "that I have a love of luxury; but papa says if I'm not envious it won't do any harm; and I'm sure I'm not."

When they reached the Farringtons' Elise took Patty at once to her own room. Patty was not surprised to find that this was the prettiest bedroom she had ever seen, and she fairly revelled in the beautiful furnishings and decorations.

"Oh, this room is all right," said Elise, carelessly; "but if you want to see a really remarkable room, just step out here."

As she spoke, Elise opened the door out to what Patty supposed was a sort of balcony or enclosed veranda at the back of the house. But it was not exactly that; it was, as Elise expressed it, "a glass room." It was an extension of the house, and the sides and roof were entirely of glass. A clever arrangement of Japanese screens adjusted the light as desired.

"You see," explained Elise, "I'm a sort of sun-worshipper. I never can get sunlight enough in the city, so I planned this room all myself and father had it built for me. There is an extension of the house below it and they only had to put up a sort of frame or skeleton room, and then enclose it with glass. So here, you see, I have plenty of light and I just revel in it. I call it my studio, because I paint a little; but I sit here more to read, or to chum with my friends, or just to loaf and do nothing."

"I love sunlight, too," exclaimed Patty, "and I think this room is wonderful. I used to have a pretty little enclosed balcony at my aunt's in Vernondale; but of course it wasn't like this."

The furniture in Elise's studio was almost entirely of gilded wicker-work, and gilt-framed mirrors added to the general glittering effect. On the whole, Patty thought she preferred her balcony at Aunt Alice's, but this room was very novel and interesting and far better adapted for winter weather.

"Of course there's no way to heat it," said Elise, "for I wasn't going to have the glass walls spoiled with old pipes and radiators. But the sun usually warms it sufficiently, or I can leave the doors open from my bedroom."

"How do you like the Oliphant?" asked Patty as the girls settled down for an intimate chat.

"Oh, I like it all right; I think the school is as good as any and Miss Oliphant seems very nice, though really I haven't seen much of her. I like the girls fairly well, but the Grigs seem to be the nicest ones of the whole school."

"Oh, you think that because you know them better than the others. Isn't Hilda a dear?"

"Yes, I suppose so; but somehow, I don't get on with her quite as well as with the others. I always seem to rub her the wrong way, though I never mean to."

"That's because you both want to rule," said Patty, laughing; "has it never struck you, Elise, that you're very fond of having things your own way?"

"Yes," returned Elise, tranquilly, "I know quite well what you mean. It's my nature to boss others."

"Yes, that's just it; and it's Hilda's nature, too."

"And it's your nature, too."

"Yes, I think it is. But I don't care so much about it as you two girls, and I'm more willing to give in."

"You're better natured—that's the truth. And that's one reason why I like you best of all the schoolgirls. And I hope you like me; do you?"

"Of course I do, or I shouldn't be here now."

"I don't believe you would. But there are some girls, and you must excuse my saying this, who just like me, or pretend to like me, because I'm one of 'the rich Farringtons.' I know that sounds horrid, but I think you understand. It's so ridiculous that the mere accident of having more money than some other people should make people think us desirable acquaintances."

"I think I understand what you mean," said Patty, smiling at Elise's earnestness, "but don't you bother about me. I like you because I think you're the kind of a girl I like; and I don't care a speck more for you because your father's a millionaire. But, to be truly honest, aside from your own charming self, I do like to see all these lovely things you have in your home; and I like to play in your Casino and I like to ride in your carriage."

"So do I," said Elise; "I enjoy it all. But if it were all taken away from me to-morrow, I wouldn't mind so very much. Do you know, I've always thought I should rather enjoy it if I had to earn my own living."

"Well, you are a queer girl, and I hope you won't be able to realise your wish very soon; for, if you'll excuse my saying it, I don't believe you *could* earn your own living."

"I don't know whether I could or not; but it would be so exciting to try."

"Well, it's an excitement that you ought to be thankful not to have at present."

Then the girls went down to luncheon, and after that to the matinée. The time passed like a happy dream, and when Patty was again set down at her own home, she felt more than ever

glad that she had such delightful friends. She spent the evening giving her father and Grandma a detailed account of her experiences, and succeeded in making them almost as enthusiastic as herself.

CHAPTER XVI

A CAPABLE COOK

THE next Saturday morning the Grigs met at Hilda's, and after the merry meeting was over Clementine begged Patty to stop in at her house for a few moments on her way home.

"I'd ask you to stay to luncheon," said Clementine, as they went through the hall, "but mamma is giving a luncheon party to-day, and I can't have anything to eat myself until after her guests have gone."

"Oh, I must go home anyway," said Patty; "Grandma is expecting me."

"See how pretty the table looks," said Clementine, as the girls passed by the open door of the dining-room.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Patty, as she paused to look at the daintily appointed table, with its shining glass and silver, its decorations and pretty name cards. "Your mother knows just how to arrange a table, doesn't she? How many are coming?"

"Eight; that is, there will be eight with mamma. Of course I never go to the table when she has formal company. I can have something to eat in the butler's pantry, or I can wait until the luncheon is over and then go in the dining-room. Yes, the table will look lovely after the flowers are on and all the last touches."

The two girls went on up to the play-room and were soon engrossed in lively chat about their own affairs.

Suddenly Mrs. Morse appeared in the doorway.

"Oh, Clementine," she exclaimed, with an air of the greatest consternation, "I don't know *what* I am to do! Cook has scalded her hands fearfully; she upset a kettle of boiling water and the burns were so bad I had to send her straight to the hospital. She's just gone and it's after half-past twelve now and all those people coming to luncheon at half-past one. Nothing is cooked, nothing is ready and I'm at my wits' end."

"Can't Jane cook?"

"No, she's only a waitress; and besides, I need her in the dining-room. I can't think of anything but for you to run right down to Pacetti's

and ask them to send me a capable, first-class cook at once. I'd telephone, but I'm afraid they'd send some inexperienced person, so I think it better for you to go. Make them understand the necessity for haste; but, dear me, they're so slow, anyway, that I doubt if a cook would reach here before half-past one. And there is so much to be done. I never was in such an unfortunate situation!"

Mrs. Morse looked the picture of despair, and indeed it was not surprising that she should. But while she had been talking to Clementine, Patty had been doing some quick thinking.

"Mrs. Morse," she said, "if you will trust me, I will cook your luncheon for you. I can do it perfectly well and I will engage to have everything ready at half-past one, if I can go right to work."

"My dear child, you're crazy. Everything is all prepared to be cooked, but it is by no means a plain every-day meal. There are quail to be broiled, lobster Newburg to be prepared, salad dressing, soup, coffee, and no end of things to be looked after, besides a most elaborate dessert from the confectioner's which has to be properly arranged. So you see, though I appreciate

your kind offer of help, it is outside the possibilities."

Patty's eyes danced as she heard this list of the fancy dishes in which her soul delighted.

"Please let me do it, Mrs. Morse," she begged; "I know how to do everything you've mentioned, and with Clementine to help me I'll send up the dishes exactly as they should be."

"But I don't know a thing about cooking," exclaimed Clementine, in dismay.

"I don't want you to help me cook; I'll do that. I just want you to help me beat eggs or chop parsley or things like that. You must promise to obey my orders strictly and quickly; then there'll be no trouble of any kind. Truly, Mrs. Morse, I can do it and do it right."

Patty's air of assurance convinced Mrs. Morse, and though it seemed absurd, the poor lady was so anxious to believe in this apparent miracle that she consented.

"Why, Patty," she said, "if you really *can* do it, it would be a perfect godsend to me to have you."

"Indeed I can," said Patty, who was already turning up the sleeves of her shirt-waist by way of preparation. "Just give me a big apron and wait one minute while I telephone to Grand-

ma not to expect me home to luncheon, and then show me the way to the kitchen."

When they reached the kitchen Patty was delighted to see how beautifully everything was prepared for cooking. The quail were already on the broiler, the bread cut for toast, the ingredients for the salad dressing measured. The dishes were piled in order and the cooking utensils laid ready to hand.

"Why, it will be no trouble at all!" she exclaimed; "your cook must be a genius to have everything so systematically prepared."

"Are you quite sure you know how?" said Mrs. Morse, once more, looking doubtfully at the uncooked viands.

"Oh, yes, indeed!" exclaimed Patty, blithely; "it's twice as easy as I thought it was going to be. But I must have full sway, and no interference of any sort. Now you run along, good lady, and put on your pretty gown, and don't give another thought to your food. But please send the waitress to me, as we must understand each other."

Mrs. Morse looked at Patty with a sort of awe, as if she had suddenly discovered a genius in one whom she had hitherto thought of as a mere child. Then she went away to dress,

feeling that somehow things would come out all right.

Patty was in her element. Not only because she dearly loved to cook and thoroughly understood the concoction of fancy dishes, but more because she was so delighted to have an opportunity to help Mrs. Morse. Clementine's mother was one of her ideal women, and Patty admired her exceedingly. Moreover, she had been very kind to Patty and the grateful girl was happy in the thought of being a real help to her good friend.

When Jane came to the kitchen Patty explained the situation to her and in a few clear straightforward orders made it impossible that any mistake should occur between the cooking and the serving. Patty unconsciously assumed an air of dignity, which struck Clementine as intensely comical, but which impressed Jane as the demeanour of a genius.

"Now," said Patty, when Jane had returned to the dining-room, "I'll give you fair warning, Clementine, that I shall be pretty cross while I'm doing this cooking. You know crossness is the prerogative of a cook. So don't mind me, but just help all you can by keeping quiet and doing as I tell you. I'm sorry to seem dicta-

torial and horrid, but really it's the only way to make your mother's luncheon a success."

And then Patty became entirely absorbed in her work. She took a rapid survey of everything, summarized what she had to do, looked up some forgotten points in a recipe book and moved around so deftly and capably that Clementine just sat and stared at her.

She put the *bouillon* on to heat, also a great kettle of lard; she moulded the croquettes and put the French peas on the stove.

"Now," she said to Clementine, "have you an ice crusher?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Clementine, helplessly; "what is it like?"

Patty laughed; "I'll find it," she said, and after a short search she did. Then she set Clementine to crushing ice for the oysters, a task which that young woman accomplished successfully and with great pride in her own achievement.

"All right," said Patty, with an abstracted air; "now toast these rounds of bread, while you can have the fire; and then put them in the oven to keep hot."

This performance was not so successful, for when Clementine showed her plate of toast it

was a collection of burnt crips and underdone, spongy bread.

"For goodness' sake!" exclaimed Patty, "can't you toast better than that? They won't do at all. Cut some more bread and hurry up about it!"

"You said you'd be cross," murmured Clementine, as she cut more bread; "but you didn't say you'd snap my head off like a raging tiger."

Both girls laughed, but Patty toasted the bread herself, as she wasn't willing to take any more chances in that direction.

But the real excitement began when the luncheon hour actually arrived.

Though not exactly nervous, Patty's mind was strung to a certain tension which can only be appreciated by those who know the sensations of an *amateur* cook preparing a formal meal.

Precisely at half-past one Patty placed on the dumb-waiter eight plates of grape-fruit, the appearance of which caused Clementine to clasp her hands in speechless admiration. Each golden hemisphere nestled in a bed of clear, cracked ice, and was marvellously decorated with crimson cherries and glossy, green orange leaves.

After this the various courses followed one another in what seemed to the girls maddeningly rapid succession.

Clementine soon discovered that she could do only the simplest things, but her quick wit enabled her to help in other ways, by getting the dishes ready and handing Patty such things as she wanted.

It was a thrilling hour, but Patty's spirits rose as one course after another turned out the very acme of perfection. The croquettes were the loveliest golden brown, the quail broiled to a turn, the lobster hot in its paper cases and the salad a dream of cold, crisp beauty. At last they reached the dessert. This was a complicated affair with various adjuncts in the way of sauces and whipped cream. The main part was frozen and was packed in a large tub of ice and salt. Clementine volunteered to get this out, and as Patty was busy, she let her do it.

But alas, the inexperienced girl opened the pudding-mould before taking it from the freezer, the salt water rushed in, and in a moment the delicious confection was totally uneatable.

Patty grasped the situation. Clementine fully expected she would be cross, now if ever; but,

as Patty afterward explained, the occasion was too critical for that.

"The dessert is spoiled!" she said, in an awe-stricken whisper. "We must make another!"

"What out of?" asked Clementine, in the same hushed tone.

"I don't know; what have you in the house?"

"Bread!" exclaimed Clementine, with a sudden inspiration from the loaf on the table.

"Ridiculous! there must be something else! Have you any stale cake?"

"I don't know. Yes, wait a minute, there's plenty of fruit-cake; but it's locked up in one of the pantry cupboards."

"Where's the key? Quick!"

"Why, I don't know; I suppose it's in mamma's desk."

"Run and get it!" and Patty fairly glared at Clementine. "Fly! and don't be gone more than half a minute!"

Poor Clementine, bewildered by the awful emergency which she had herself brought about, flew for the key, and luckily found it at once.

She returned with a huge fruit-cake, and in a second Patty's anxious face broke into smiles.

"The country is safe!" she cried, dancing

round the kitchen; "Fate cannot harm us now, nor salt water either."

"I don't believe mamma will like just fruit-cake for dessert," said Clementine, dubiously.

"Huh!" said Patty, tossing her head in the air; "watch the magician! But first, have you any rather large-sized wine-glasses? Tall, you know, with slender stems."

"Yes," said Clementine, already disappearing in quest of them.

When she returned Patty had eight discs of cake, which she had cut from slices, and placing one in each glass, she put on each a spoonful of the sauce that had been intended for the unfortunate frozen pudding. This she topped with a shapely mound of whipped cream, on which she daintily placed candied cherries.

The desserts were ready in ample time, and after sending up the coffee Patty drew a long sigh of relief.

Then the two hungry girls sat down in the kitchen to eat their own luncheon, for which there was an ample supply of the good things left, and to talk over the exciting experience.

"You're a wonder, Patty," said Clementine; "I had no idea you could do things like that."

"Oh, I've been a housekeeper in my day, you

know," said Patty; "and it was only after lots of failures that I learned to do those things right."

Later on, Mrs. Morse undertook to express her gratitude to the little girl who had rescued her from so much trouble and mortification. But the good lady's delight was too great for words, and she promised that the time would yet come when she would reward Patty in some appropriate way.

"I don't want any reward," said Patty, looking lovingly at her friend, "except to know that I helped you when nobody else could."

"You certainly did that," said Mrs. Morse.

CHAPTER XVII

LORRAINE'S ENDEAVOUR

PATTY'S sunny disposition and invariable good humour exerted a beneficial influence on Lorraine, though the effects were slow and gradual. But the girl herself was trying to be more optimistic in her general attitude toward life, and to a degree she was succeeding.

But one afternoon she came up to Patty's apartment to sit with her for a while, and the expression of her face was quite as dark and gloomy as of yore.

Patty noticed this at once, but did not remark it; instead, she began chatting in a merry vein, hoping by this means to cheer up her dismal caller. But it was of no avail, for Lorraine evidently had a trouble of some sort on her mind.

At last she exclaimed, in a stormy way, "I just *hate* Elise Farrington!"

"Oho," thought Patty to herself, "so that's the trouble, is it?"

But aloud she only said: "Why do you hate her? She doesn't hate you."

"Yes she does. She just snubs me right and left, and she doesn't invite me to her Casino, or anything."

"Now look here, Lorraine, you are unjust and unfair. Elise doesn't snub you, or if she does, it's because you don't give her a chance to be nice to you. You're my friend, but Elise is my friend, too, and I want fair play all around. I've seen you with Elise Farrington, and you snub her worse than she does you; and I don't wonder she doesn't invite you to see her!"

Patty didn't often scold Lorraine as hard as this, but her sense of justice was aroused, and she determined to give it full play for once.

Lorraine began to cry, but Patty knew they were not tears of repentance, so she went on:

"It's perfectly silly, Lorraine, the way you act. Here you might just as well belong to the Grigs, and have lots of good times; but just because you *prefer* to consider yourself snubbed at every tack and turn, when nobody means anything of the sort at all, of course you can't belong to a club whose only object is to be merry and gay."

"I don't want to belong to your old Grigs! I think they're silly, and I hate 'em all!"

"You *do* want to belong, and you *don't* think they're silly! Now look here, Lorraine, I'm just about at the end of my patience. I've done everything I could for you, to make you more like the other girls, and though you're nicer in some ways than you used to be, yet you're so foolishly sensitive that you make yourself a lot of trouble that I can't help. I don't mind telling you, now that we're on the subject, that the girls are all ready to take you in as a member of the Grigs, if you'll be nice and pleasant. But we don't want any disagreeable members, or any members who insist on thinking themselves snubbed when nobody had any such intention."

Lorraine stopped crying and looked at Patty with a peculiar expression.

"Do you really mean," she said, "that you'd take me into the Grigs if I were not so bad-tempered?"

"Well, since you choose to put it that way, that's just about what I do mean," said Patty, politely ignoring the fact that Lorraine had declared she didn't want to be a Grig.

"Well, then I *will* be better-natured, and stop being so hateful to the girls. Just make me a Grig and I'll show you."

"No, Lorraine, that won't do; you've got to prove yourself first. Now, I'll tell you what—you be real nice to Elise and make her like you, or rather, *let* her like you, and then there'll be no trouble about getting you into the society."

"All right," said Lorraine, hopefully, "but what can I do? Elise won't speak to me now."

"Oh, pshaw! yes, she will. I'll guarantee that she'll meet you half-way. Now here's a plan; you must do something like this. Get your mother to let you invite Elise to come to see you some afternoon, and then invite the Harts and me, too, and have a real jolly afternoon. They'll all come, and then if you're nice and pleasant, as you know perfectly well how to be, the girls can't help liking you. Oh, Lorraine, you're *such* a goose! It's a great deal easier to go through the world happy and smiling than to mope along, glum and cross-grained."

"It is for you, Patty, because you're born happy, and you can't help staying so. But I'm different."

"Well then un-different yourself as soon as

you can. It's silly—that's what it is—it's worse than silly—it's *wicked* not to be happy and gay. I've fooled with you long enough, and now I'm going to *make* you behave yourself! Laugh now, laugh at once!"

Patty's gaiety was infectious, and Lorraine laughed because she couldn't help it. Then they fell to making plans for the little afternoon party, and Lorraine's spirits rose until there was nothing to choose between the merriment of the two girls.

"And I'll tell you what," said Patty; "we're making a scrap-book for Roger Farrington; he's in the hospital, you know. And if you will have some funny pictures or stories ready to put in it, you needn't worry any further about Elise's liking you. She's the most grateful girl for little things I ever saw."

"Oh, I can do that," said Lorraine; "I'd love to."

Before Lorraine invited the girls to visit her, Patty had talked with each one and made them promise to accept the invitation, and do all that they could to help along the good cause, which, as she explained, was a truly Griggish one.

So the four girls went to Lorraine's one afternoon, all in a merry mood. The little party

was a great success, for Lorraine at her best was a charming hostess, and her mother was very kind and hospitable.

Each girl brought some contribution for Roger's scrap-book, and Patty was secretly delighted when she found that Lorraine's donation was quite the jolliest of all.

Lorraine was clever with her pencil, and with her needle, and she had designed some funny little football players by cutting pictures of football celebrities from the papers. These she had dressed up in bits of real material, had made the footballs of real leather, and made tiny silk flags in college colours.

Elise was delighted beyond all measure at the clever little figures, and when Lorraine, a little bashfully, offered a poem she had written to go with them, the girls all declared she was a genius. It was a humorous poem, with a football refrain, and Elise said that she was sure Roger would commit it to memory, and quote it on every possible occasion.

Happily the girls went to work, cutting and pasting, drawing and sketching, writing and sewing, on the various pages until the scrap-book became a marvellous work of art.

Patty asked them to leave one or two pages

blank for Mr. Hepworth's funny sketches, and promised too, that he would decorate the cover.

A few days later, Mr. Hepworth spent the evening with the Fairfields, and willingly agreed to add his share to the book.

He filled a couple of pages with drawings funny enough to make a whole hospital laugh, and then adorned the cover with a conventional design of football players and Grigs, surrounding a patient-looking patient in a hospital cot.

While Mr. Hepworth was sketching, Patty related with glee how much Lorraine had helped with the book, and how really amiable and pleasant the girl had begun to be. As Mr. Hepworth was a frequent visitor at the Fairfields', he knew a good deal about Lorraine, and was much interested.

"If Lorraine is really trying to live The Merry Life," said Mr. Fairfield, "she ought to be aided and encouraged in every possible way. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do, Patty. Next Saturday afternoon I'll take you and Lorraine to the circus. We'll take Grandma along, because the circus is one of her favourite forms of amusement, and we'll take Hepworth, as a reward for this truly beautiful art work he's

accomplishing this evening. Now, we'll invite one more favourite friend and you may select anyone you like."

"Oh, papa, let's ask Kenneth. He's working awfully hard just now, and he'd enjoy the fun so much."

"Yes," said Mr. Hepworth, cordially, as he looked up from his drawing, "ask young Harper—he's always an addition to any party."

"I'm delighted to go," said Grandma. "I've thought about it ever since they put up the big posters. I certainly do enjoy a circus."

"Your tastes are certainly frisky, Grandma," said Mr. Fairfield. "Now, for a lady of your dignified appearance an oratorio or a nice lecture on psychology would seem more fitting."

"When you invite me to those, I may go also," said Grandma, gaily; "but next Saturday afternoon I consider myself engaged for the circus. You'll have a box, I suppose."

"Yes," said Mr. Fairfield, "we'll have anything that'll add to your pleasure; not omitting pop-corn and pink lemonade, if they're to be had."

"Oh, papa!" cried Patty, "this kind of a

circus doesn't have those things. You're thinking of a country circus. The circus in Madison Square Garden isn't like that."

"Well, at any rate," said Mr. Hepworth, "I hope it has all the traditional features in the way of clowns, and freaks, and acrobats, and other trained animals."

"Yes, they have all of those," said Grandma, eagerly, "for I saw them on the posters."

They all laughed at this, and declared it was more fun to take Grandma to the circus than to take a child.

Both Lorraine and Kenneth accepted the invitation with pleasure, and Kenneth volunteered to make Lorraine his especial charge, and if the fun of the circus flagged, to amuse her with some ready-made fun of his own.

Saturday was a beautiful, bright day, and Mr. Fairfield promised to come home to luncheon, in order that they might all start together, in ample time for the performance.

About eleven o'clock a card was brought up to Patty by the hall boy.

"Miss Rachel Daggett," she read in dismayed tones. "Grandma! she has come to stay a few days! She said she would, you know, the last time we were in Vernondale, and

now she's here. Oh, I wish she had chosen any other day! She wouldn't let me set the time, but said she would come whenever the mood struck her."

"Well, my dear, you can't help it. Send word for her to come up, and make the best of it."

"But, Grandma, what about the circus? She won't go with us—I can't imagine Miss Daggett at a circus—and somebody will have to stay home with her. I'd just as lief stay myself as to have you or papa stay, and of course we can't leave her alone."

"Perhaps she'll want to lie down and rest after her journey," suggested Grandma.

"Not she! Miss Daggett *never* lies down to rest. I can't imagine it! No, I think we'll have to give up the whole trip. Perhaps papa can exchange the box for some other date."

By this time the visitor was at the door, and Patty and Grandma greeted her pleasantly.

Miss Daggett had been their next-door neighbour in Vernondale, and Patty was really fond of the queer old lady, but she only wished she had chosen some other day to visit them, or had at least let them know beforehand.

"I told you I'd come when the mood took

me," said Miss Daggett, as she removed her antiquated bonnet.

All of Miss Daggett's apparel was what Patty called ancient and honourable. Her gown and cloak were of the richest material, but made in fashions of many years ago. Although a woman of wealth, Miss Daggett was subject to whims, one of which was to wear out the dresses she had before buying any new ones. As this whim had followed another whim of lavish extravagance, the dresses in question were of rich velvets and brocades which did not wear out rapidly. The result was that Miss Daggett went about, looking as if she had stepped out of an old picture.

Patty was quite accustomed to her old-fashioned garb, but suddenly realised that in the hotel dining-room it would be rather conspicuous.

But this thought didn't bother her much, for she knew it was something she couldn't help, and Miss Daggett had the dignified air of a thorough gentlewoman, notwithstanding her erratic costume.

"I've come to stay three days," she announced in the abrupt way peculiar to her; "I shall go home Tuesday morning at eleven o'clock. Let

me look at you, Patty. Why, I declare, you look just as you always did. I was afraid I'd find you tricked out in all sorts of gew-gaws and disporting yourself like a grown-up young lady."

"Oh no, I'm still a little girl, Miss Daggett," said Patty, "and I'm just as fond of fun and frolic as ever."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CIRCUS PARTY

PATTY made that last remark by way of introducing the subject of the circus, for her only hope was that by some miraculous whim Miss Daggett would consent to go with them. Their party numbered only six, and Patty knew that the box would hold eight, so there was room enough if Miss Daggett would go. But as Patty looked at her guest's stern, angular face, she didn't see anything that led her to feel very hopeful.

"We had expected, Miss Daggett," she said, "to go to the circus this afternoon. Would you care to go with us?"

"To the circus! for the land's sake, no! I'm surprised that you would think of going, or that your father would let you go. The circus, indeed!"

"Why, Miss Daggett," said Patty, laughing, in spite of her disappointment, at Miss Daggett's shocked expression, "papa's going to

take us, and Grandma is going, too—that is, we were—but of course, if you don't care to go——"

"Care to go? of course I don't care to go! All their elephants and wild tigers couldn't drag me there. And of course I expect you to stay at home with me. You can go to the circus any time you choose, if you *do* choose, though I think it a shocking thing to do; but Rachel Daggett doesn't visit in the city very often, and when she does she expects to have proper respect paid to her."

Patty's spirits sank. She had hoped that even if Miss Daggett wouldn't go herself, she would insist that the rest of the party should keep their engagement.

"We had invited a few other friends to go," she said, feeling that Miss Daggett's attitude justified her in this further statement.

"You did, hey? Well, I suppose you can telephone to them that you're not going. Of course, if I'm an unwelcome guest——"

"Oh no, Miss Daggett, not that; of course you're not unwelcome."

"Well, then, act as if you were glad to see me, and don't be everlastingly whining because you can't go to your old circus."

Although rudely put, Patty knew in her own heart the principle of Miss Daggett's speech was that of true hospitality, and she decided to act upon it. Moreover, she felt sure that when her father came home he would fix matters somehow. How, she didn't know, but she knew it would be all right.

When Mr. Fairfield arrived he greeted the unexpected guest in his own cordial, pleasant way.

"You're just in time," he said, grasping the situation at once; "we're all going to the circus this afternoon, and we'll be delighted to have you accompany us. We have two extra seats, so there's plenty of room."

"Your daughter has already given me the same invitation," said Miss Daggett, "and as I said to her, I repeat to you: nothing would induce me to go to a circus. I think it entirely undignified and improper, and I am surprised that you should suggest such a thing."

"Oh, come now, Miss Daggett, you can't mean that. Circuses are all right, especially the one in Madison Square Garden. Why, they have the finest acrobats and trapeze performers in the world; and a score of trained elephants. Then there is the lovely lady who

whizzes through space in an automobile, and flies around a great circular track upside down."

"What!" exclaimed Miss Daggett, interested in spite of herself.

"Yes, and two men who ride down hill on bicycles, and at the end jump off into the air, still riding, and jump on again, passing each other as they go."

"I'd like to see that," said Miss Daggett, thrilled by Mr. Fairfield's description, "if it was in a private house; but I wouldn't go to the circus to see it!"

"Have you never been to a circus?" inquired Mr. Fairfield.

"That's neither here nor there," said Miss Daggett, drawing herself up stiffly, and leaving the question unanswered.

"Well, I'm sorry you won't go," said Mr. Fairfield, urbanely, "for in that case the party must be given up. And your nephew, Kenneth, will be so disappointed."

This was diplomacy on Mr. Fairfield's part, for he well knew how Miss Daggett idolised young Harper, and he hoped, as a last resort, that this argument might move her.

"Kenneth!" almost shrieked the old lady,

"is *he* going? *You* didn't tell me *he* was going;" and she glared reprovingly at Patty.

"I told you we had invited some friends," said Patty, "and he is among them."

"Kenneth going!" again exclaimed Miss Daggett; "why then, *of course* I'll go. All their elephants and wild tigers couldn't keep me at home if Kenneth is going. Come, let us have luncheon, so we can all be ready in time, and not keep Kenneth waiting. Dear boy, when will he be here?"

"He's coming at quarter of two," said Patty, "and then we're all going down together. Mr. Hepworth is going, and my friend Lorraine Hamilton."

But Miss Daggett seemed to care little who the other guests were, since her nephew was to be of the party. Patty was quite accustomed to the old lady's eccentricities, and, moreover, she was so delighted that the circus party was safe after all that she humoured Miss Daggett in every possible way. She talked to her about Kenneth, and told her of the lad's good progress in college; and adroitly referred to the fact that they had all thought his steady application to study deserved a reward in the diversions of the circus.

Miss Daggett quite agreed to this, and now that the fact of their going was established, she admitted that she herself was anxious to see the wonders of which Mr. Fairfield had spoken.

During luncheon-time Patty was summoned to the telephone.

To her surprise the speaker proved to be none other than Roger Farrington.

He said he had been discharged from the hospital the night before, and was again at home, although his arm was still in a sling. He wanted to know if he might come down that afternoon and thank Patty in person for the scrap-book, and for the merry messages she had sent to him by Elise.

Patty did some quick thinking. Then she said:

"Why, you see, Roger, we're all going to the circus this afternoon; but we have an extra seat, and if you'll go with us, we'll be awfully glad to have you."

"Go!" exclaimed Roger, "I should rather say I would!"

"Well, if you go," said Patty, imbued with a sudden spirit of mischief, "you must consider yourself the special escort of a friend who is

visiting me. Her name is Miss Daggett, and I want her to have a real good time."

"Trust me," said Roger; "I'll give her the time of her life. May I call for her? Are we all to go together?"

"Yes," said Patty, "papa has engaged an omnibus, and we're going to leave here at quarter before two. Be sure to be on time."

"Oh, I'll be there; give my regards to Miss Daggett, and expect me soon."

Patty said good-bye, and then returned to the table, where she told them all what she had done. Mr. Fairfield expressed pleasure at having another in their party, and said that Roger certainly ought to have some fun after his weary stay in the hospital.

"And I asked him to be your especial escort, Miss Daggett," said Patty, a little uncertain as to how the lady would take this announcement.

"Now, that's downright nice of you," said Miss Daggett, beaming with pleasure in a most unexpected way. But all her ways were unexpected, and Patty wondered what Roger would think of her friend.

When Kenneth Harper came he was surprised to find his aunt there, and still more surprised to learn that she was going with them to

the circus. Miss Daggett was delighted to see him, and Kenneth was also glad to see her, for between this aunt and nephew there existed a great deal of affection, and Miss Daggett was always less blunt and a little more docile when Kenneth was around.

Shortly before the time appointed Roger appeared. Owing to the fact that his arm was in a sling, it was with some difficulty that he carried two parcels and managed his hat.

"You come like the Greeks bearing gifts," said Kenneth, as he hastened to relieve Roger of his burdens.

"Those are for Miss Daggett," said Roger, "the lady I am to escort to the circus."

Kenneth tried not to show his amazement, and Patty cast a roguish glance at Roger as she presented him to Miss Daggett.

Roger confessed afterwards that at that moment anyone could easily have knocked him down with a feather; for without thinking much about it, he had assumed that Patty's friend was a girl of her own age, and he had gallantly brought her some candy and some violets.

But Miss Daggett herself proved quite equal to the situation. Without a trace of self-consciousness or embarrassment, she accepted the

parcels from Roger in the most gracious way, and began to untie them with all the ingenuous delight of a young girl.

"Let me help you," said Mr. Fairfield, as he cut the strings of the boxes.

The violets were a huge bunch from the shop of a fashionable florist, and the generous-sized box of confections were of the very best procurable.

Miss Daggett was so frankly delighted that Roger, too, rose to his part, and declared that she must wear the violets that afternoon. Although their appearance on the rich, old-fashioned mantilla was decidedly incongruous, yet Miss Daggett's dignity was such that it quite saved the effect from being ridiculous. Roger immediately took a fancy to the queer old lady, and determined to give Patty a little mild teasing by devoting himself to her "friend" all the afternoon. But Patty wasn't teased a bit; she was greatly pleased—indeed, only less so than Miss Daggett herself.

Kenneth had promised to make Lorraine his especial care, and as Mr. Fairfield had Grandma Elliott in his charge, Mr. Hepworth fell to Patty's share. For the first time Patty realised what an entertaining man the artist

could be. That afternoon he seemed as merry as a boy, and told droll tales, or made facetious comments on the performance, until Patty was convulsed with laughter. No less gay were Roger Farrington and his companion. Being innately courteous and gentlemanly, he deemed it his duty to entertain Miss Daggett to the very best of his ability; and spurred on by the joke of the whole affair, he exerted himself especially to be amusing. Amid so many novel experiences Miss Daggett seemed to forget her usual carping style of conversation, and grew amiable and even gay.

Kenneth, too, was doing his part well. He had promised to keep Lorraine in a light-hearted mood, and he had no trouble in doing so. For the girl met him half-way, having herself determined that she would follow Patty's oft-repeated advice. Grandma was in her element, and Mr. Fairfield was elated that his little party had turned out so successful.

"Do you know," said Mr. Hepworth, "that you are a veritable Dispenser of Happiness?"

"What do you mean?" asked Patty, with her frank smile.

"Why, I mean that you're not only happy yourself, but you give happiness to all who are

near you. Consciously, I mean; you purposely arranged that Lorraine should have a good time, and," here his eyes twinkled, "you made a somewhat similar plan for Miss Daggett. You asked both those boys from a real desire to give them pleasure. Mrs. Elliott is enjoying every moment of her good time, and—I'm happy, too."

"It's nice of you to be so complimentary," said Patty, "but it isn't fair for me to take it all to myself. It's papa's party, and you'd think me anything but a general benefactor if you knew how cross I was when Miss Daggett came in unexpectedly this morning."

"And aside from your intentional dispensing of happiness," went on Hepworth, ignoring her confession of ill-temper, "your unconscious influence is that of pure joy. You radiate happiness, and no one can be near you without feeling its influence. I did not intend, Patty, to say this quite so baldly, but it is not meant as idle compliment or flattery, only as an honest recognition of your charm."

Patty accepted what Mr. Hepworth said quite simply, and looked at him with clear, unembarrassed eyes.

"Thank you, Mr. Hepworth," she said; "I

know you would not say those things unless you meant them. I'm truly glad that you think my influence, be it ever so small, is toward happiness. For I am always happy; somehow I can't help it, and I want the whole world to be so, too."

"It is that dear wish in your heart that makes you what you are," said Mr. Hepworth, and then, with what seemed to be a sudden effort, he stopped their serious conversation and exclaimed: "*Will* you look at that clown. Isn't he quite the funniest one you ever saw?"

Patty laughed at the ridiculous fellow, and then the wonders of the aerial bicyclists, and the even more marvellous *autobolide,* claimed their attention.

But long after she had forgotten the amusing scenes of the circus Patty remembered what Mr. Hepworth had said.

CHAPTER XIX

THEMES

ON Friday afternoons the girls of the Oliphant school were required to read original papers which they had written through the week, and which were technically known as "Themes."

These Themes were Patty's special delight. Her more prosaic lessons she learned from a sense of duty, and also because of her ambition to achieve the prize which was to be given at Christmas to the pupil with the best general average of marks.

Patty knew she stood high on the list, but Clementine, Adelaide, Hilda, and even Lorraine were also far above most of the other pupils.

The rivalry was a good-natured and generous one. Elise stood no chance for the prize, as she had entered school a fortnight later than the others. Her sympathies were entirely with Patty, and she strongly hoped that she would win the prize.

The markings of the Themes counted for a great deal, and the uniform excellence of Patty's essays kept her average up in spite of her occasional low marks in mathematics, a study which she detested.

It was no trouble for Patty to write imaginative compositions. Her fertile fancy and her sense of humour provided ample material, and her natural gift of expression made it easy for her to write excellent Themes.

One Wednesday afternoon in November she sat down to write her paper for Friday.

"Give me a subject, Grandma," she said gaily; "I want to get my Theme done in a jiffy to-day."

Grandma Elliott looked at the pretty girl who sat at her desk with her pen held above her paper. Patty's sunshiny face, in its frame of curling gold hair, was an ideal vision of youth and happiness.

"Why don't you write on the 'Spirit of Happiness?' said Grandma, "and then you can put yourself right into your work."

"I'll do it!" cried Patty; "I *am* happy, and I might as well tell it to the world at large."

She dashed into her subject, and scribbled rapidly for some time.

"There!" she said, as she finished the last page, "I do believe, Grandma, that's the best Theme I've written; and if you want to read it, you may. I'm much obliged to you for suggesting the subject."

Grandma read the merry little composition, and quite agreed that it was among the best of Patty's efforts at literature.

"Now that's off my mind, for this week," she said; "I do like to get it done, and then I can frisk about with a clear conscience. Now I'm going to run up to Adelaide's for a minute, and see what she's doing."

Patty ran upstairs to the next floor of The Wilberforce, and rang the bell of the Hares' apartment.

She found Adelaide also busy at work on her Theme.

"Oh, then I won't disturb you," said Patty; "I'll go away until you get the old thing done, and then you come down and see me."

"I'll never get it done," said Adelaide, disconsolately; "I can't dash things off in a minute like you do; I have to grub over them, and then they're no good. I wish you'd stay and help me."

"All right, I will. I won't help you enough

to make it wrong, you know; suppose I just give you a subject, and a sort of an outline of the points, and then you write it all yourself."

"Do," cried Adelaide, eagerly; "what a comfort you are, Patty!"

Easily Patty detailed the foundation of a Theme, and then while Adelaide was writing, she left her to herself and went in search of the rest of the family. She made a new bonnet for Jeannette's doll, and listened to Editha's new song. Then she helped Mrs. Hart arrange some flowers which had just arrived, and by that time Adelaide's work was finished, and the two girls went off by themselves for a cosey chat.

"What do you think I heard to-day?" began Adelaide; "Flossy Fisher told me this afternoon when we were in the coat-room, getting our wraps, and I couldn't tell you on the way home from school because Lorraine was with us. But it's the most surprising thing I ever heard."

"Well, what is it? Don't keep me in suspense any longer."

"Why, it's just this: Flossy Fisher overheard Miss Oliphant say——"

"Oh, if Flossy was eavesdropping I don't want to hear what she heard."

"No, she wasn't eavesdropping; honest, she wasn't, Patty. But she was just passing through the hall, and she couldn't help hearing Miss Oliphant say it to Miss Fenton. Miss Oliphant had just come out of her private study, where she had been making up the averages. And she said to Miss Fenton that you and Lorraine were exactly even."

"What? *Lorraine!*"

"Yes; I told you it was surprising. But you know Lorraine hasn't missed a day, and she generally has her lessons perfect. She's like me; her greatest trouble is with her Themes. But even they have been pretty good lately, and so, you see, her average has crawled up. So I wanted to tell you as soon as I could, because you must work harder and get ahead of Lorraine, somehow. Of course we all want you to have the prize, but unless you're careful Lorraine will get it."

"I *would* like to get the general prize," said Patty, "but I'd like for Lorraine to get it, too. If we're just even, perhaps Miss Oliphant will divide it between us."

"She can't; it's always a book; a great big gilt-edged affair, of poems, or something like that."

"It isn't the book I care for, it's the honor. Papa would be so pleased if I won the general prize, and so would Grandma, and so would all my friends—and so would I."

"So would we all of us; and you *must* win it. You can do it easily enough, now that you know you have to spur up a little to get ahead of Lorraine. And of course it isn't likely that you two will stay just even. If you don't get ahead of Lorraine, she'll probably get ahead of you. Only your marks happen to be even just now."

"I hope they stay even till Christmas, for though I want the prize, I don't want to take it away from Lorraine."

"Don't be silly; you're not taking it away from her any more than you are from the rest of us."

"I suppose not; but it seems so, when our marks are just even."

After Patty went home she thought the matter over seriously. It seemed to her that she had so much happiness in her life, and Lorraine had so little, that Lorraine ought to have the prize for that reason. "If I miss a lesson or two," thought Patty, "that will throw her marks ahead, for I'm sure she won't miss any.

But even then, I'm afraid I'll get ahead of her on my Themes. I wonder if it would be right for me to lose some marks on purpose that she may get the prize. I don't know, I'm sure. And I hate to ask papa anything like this, for it sounds so silly, and so as if I thought myself 'noble,' like *Sentimental Tommy*. I do hate to pose as a martyr. And anyway it isn't that sort of a spirit at all. It's only just a fair question of proportion. I have so much to make me happy, and Lorraine has so little, that she really ought to have the prize. She's trying awfully hard to be cheery and pleasant, and to get the general prize would help her along a lot. So I think it's right for me to manage to have her get it, if I can do it without actual deceit."

The more Patty thought it over, the more she felt herself justified in purposely losing the prize. It seemed to be a question entirely between Lorraine and herself. She reasoned that if she didn't win the prize, it must necessarily go to Lorraine, and though she felt sorry to give up her hope of it, yet she knew she would be more truly pleased for Lorraine to have it. Of course she would never tell anybody the truth of the matter, for that would

look like a parade of her unselfishness, and Patty was honestly single-minded in her intent.

But as she thought it over further, she realised that it would take a continuous and systematic missing of lessons to be sure of reducing her average sufficiently. This was not a pleasant outlook, and a shorter way to the same end immediately suggested itself.

If she were marked a total failure on her Theme, just for once, it would set back her record farther than many missed lessons. Now, obviously the only way to get a total failure for a Theme was not to have any. For without undue egotism, Patty knew well that her Themes were better than the other girls', and of course were marked accordingly. Purposely to write a poor Theme would be silly, and so the only thing to do would be to have no Theme. To accomplish this, it would be necessary to stay away from school some Friday. For to be there without a Theme would be unprecedented and inexplicable. And, too, an absence of a whole day would mean no marks for the day in any lesson, and thus the end desired would surely be attained.

As Patty's Theme on the "Spirit of Happiness" was beyond all doubt the best one she

had ever written, she concluded that that Friday was the day to put her plan in operation.

So on Thursday evening she casually asked her father if she might not stay at home from school the next day.

"Why, are you ill, child?" said Mr. Fairfield, in sudden alarm at this most unusual request.

"No, papa, I'm perfectly well; but I just want you, as a special favour, to let me stay home to-morrow. And another part of the favour is that neither you nor Grandma shall ask why."

"Why, of course, my dear, if you really want to stay home to-morrow you may. And I promise you that Grandma and myself will never seek to fathom the deep and dark mystery of it all."

"Good for you, papa, you're a trump! Perhaps some time I'll tell you all about it, and perhaps I won't."

So on Friday Patty stayed at home.

She busied herself with numberless little occupations, but somehow her plan, now that it was in operation, did not seem quite so attractive as it had done before. She wondered whether, after all, it wasn't quixotic and ridiculous. But anyway, the deed was done now, and she must

abide by it. Patty never cried over spilt milk, and having committed herself to her course, she dismissed all doubts from her mind. To strengthen her purpose she took her Theme from her desk and read it over. It *was* good; and without a doubt she would have been marked very high for it. Her spirits rose as she realised that even though Lorraine's Theme might not be marked as high, yet whatever its marking, Lorraine would stand that much ahead in her average.

Grandma, though mystified at Patty's remaining at home, said nothing whatever on the subject, and the morning passed pleasantly away. Grandma asked Patty if she would like to go out with her after luncheon and do a little shopping, and Patty readily acquiesced.

After they were seated at the luncheon table Patty looked across the room to where the Hamiltons usually sat, and there, to her amazement, sat Mrs. Hamilton and Lorraine.

Patty's face showed such a bewildered expression that Grandma turned to follow her glance; "Why," she exclaimed, "Lorraine has also stayed home from school to-day. Did you know she was going to?"

"I certainly did *not*," said Patty emphatically,

and then the funny side of the situation struck her and she began to laugh.

At the same time, Lorraine caught sight of Patty, and she, too, looked utterly blank with consternation and dismay, and then she, too, laughed.

After luncheon Patty took possession of Lorraine and carried her up to her own room.

"What in the world are you doing at home to-day?" she demanded.

"First, what are *you* doing at home to-day?" responded Lorraine.

Had it not been for Lorraine's peculiar expression, and quizzical looks, Patty might have thought she had stayed at home for reasons in no way connected with the general prize. But the girl's embarrassment and flustered air made Patty wonder if they weren't both actuated by the same motive.

"Look here, Lorraine Hamilton," she said, going straight to the point; "did you hear what Flossy Fisher overhead Miss Oliphant say?"

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Lorraine, temporising.

"You know very well what I mean. *Did* you?"

"Why, Flossy told me that she heard Miss

Oliphant say that you and I were even in our markings. But what of that?"

"And you stayed home to-day," said Patty, grabbing Lorraine by the shoulders, and looking her straight in the eyes, "you stayed home to-day so that I might get ahead of you!"

Lorraine's eyes opened wider. A sudden thought had struck her.

"If you suspect that," she said, "it's just because you're doing the same thing yourself! Otherwise you never would have thought of it. Patty Fairfield, *you* stayed home to-day so that *I* might get ahead of you!"

The two girls read confession in each other's eyes, and then they dropped into two chairs and laughed and laughed.

Grandma Elliott, in the next room, heard the shrieks of hilarity, and concluded that some girlish secret was the reason of Patty's unusual absence from school.

"The idea!" exclaimed Lorraine, as the beauty of Patty's sacrifice dawned upon her; "how *could* you do such a thing?"

"The idea!" cried Patty, touched by her sudden realisation of Lorraine's loyalty to herself, "how could *you* do such a thing?"

CHAPTER XX

TWO CONFIDENTIAL INTERVIEWS

WHEN the two girls realised that they had done identically the same thing, and each had chosen precisely the same way to advance the other's interests, it will be hard to say which was more pleased. Patty was deeply touched at this proof of Lorraine's devotion, for she had no idea the girl was so fond of her, and, too, she had not thought Lorraine capable of this particular way of showing affection.

Lorraine, on the other hand, was almost overcome at the thought of the merry, popular Patty caring enough for her to want her to win the prize.

The result was that a strong and real friendship was cemented between the two girls, and Lorraine's new realisation of what a friendship with Patty stood for went far toward helping her to acquire an habitual good-humour. Indeed, so glad and gay did Lorraine become over the

whole affair, that Patty privately concluded she was quite merry enough for a Grig, and determined to have her made a member of the club as soon as possible.

Of course the girls never told of this episode, for each hesitated to exploit her own share in the matter, and the story could not be told by halves.

And so the teachers and the schoolgirls were not able to discover why the two star pupils remained away from school, and so lost their marks for one whole day.

But the fact that Patty and Lorraine had frustrated each other's plan left their average of marks still even. Although they might fluctuate a little from day to day, yet the two always knew their lessons, and though Patty's Themes were usually marked higher than Lorraine's, that was offset by Lorraine's greater proficiency in mathematics.

Christmas drew nearer, and somehow the girls became aware that Lorraine and Patty were evenly matched for the general prize, and that each was anxious for the other to win it. Not that they told this in so many words, but their fellow-pupils discovered it, and the excitement about it was considerable.

Patty was a favourite in the school, but Lorraine, by the improved disposition she was now showing, had also won many friends.

She had become a member of the Grigs. Elise had by no means been dismissed to make room for her, but had been put in as a ninth member. The other Grigs were all most friendly to her, and honestly tried to show their appreciation of the new Lorraine. Some of them even went so far as to hope that she would win the prize, and that for the very same reason that influenced Patty.

So, sympathy with the two girls was pretty fairly divided, though had it come to a vote, probably the majority would have been in Patty's favour.

As it came nearer to Christmas the race was most exciting. It seemed now that the two girls aimed only to keep even. It might have been coincidence, but if Lorraine missed in one lesson, Patty was pretty sure to miss in another; and if Patty's Theme was a little less excellent than usual, somehow Lorraine's mathematics fell off a trifle.

But Patty had inherited what her father sometimes called the Fairfield stubbornness. Not content with an even record, she determined that

Lorraine's average should finally be found ahead of hers.

So, a few days before the final summing up she went to Miss Oliphant's study and asked for a private interview.

The girls rarely saw the principal of the school in a personal way, as her intercourse with them was confined almost entirely to addresses from the platform.

Patty was a little daunted when she found herself in the austere presence of Miss Oliphant, for she realised only too well that the request she was about to make was, to say the least, unconventional.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Fairfield," said Miss Oliphant, not unkindly, but in an impersonal tone that did not invite confidential conversation. "What can I do for you?"

"Why, you see, Miss Oliphant," said Patty, a little uncertain how to begin, "Lorraine Hamilton and I have just the same number of marks on our record. So, as one of us must take the general prize, I just wanted to ask you if you couldn't arrange it so that Lorraine will get it. I don't mean to do anything wrong or unfair," she added, hastily, as Miss Oliphant's expression of amazement seemed to rebuke her.

"I only mean that if there should be any doubt in marking any of our lessons, that the benefit of the doubt might be given to Lorraine."

"Do I understand," said Miss Oliphant, severely, "that you wish Miss Hamilton to be marked higher than she deserves?"

Patty thought this remark a little unjust, in consequence of which her indignation was aroused, and she spoke decidedly, though very courteously.

"No, Miss Oliphant, I do not mean that; but I know that sometimes it is difficult for a teacher to feel quite certain of the exact mark for a lesson or a Theme; and in such cases I would be glad if Lorraine might have all that can conscientiously be given to her."

"And yourself?"

"Oh, Miss Oliphant," said Patty, quite forgetting her awe of the stern principal in her eagerness, "I know that what I'm saying sounds ridiculous; but you *do* know—you must know—what I mean! Can't you somehow fix it that Lorraine shall have a little higher average than I, without committing a State's Prison offence?"

Miss Oliphant unbent in spite of herself.

"Why do you want to do this, my child?"

she asked, more gently than she had spoken before.

"Why because—because—I hardly know how to explain it, Miss Oliphant; but you know Lorraine doesn't have the best times in the world. And she isn't very popular with the girls—at least she didn't use to be; she's getting more so now—and it will make her so happy to win the general prize. I'm sure you understand, Miss Oliphant, that I don't mean to have her marked wrongfully. But just a little favouring would throw the balance over to her side."

Somehow Miss Oliphant seemed more amused than the occasion called for. Patty had been prepared to find her irate, indignant, or even scornful. But positively there was a smile in her eyes which Patty had never seen there before, and which surprised her.

However, Miss Oliphant did not explain her attitude, and only said to Patty: "You are right, Miss Fairfield; there *are* occasions where it is difficult to decide upon the exact marking for a lesson. I'm willing to assure you that in such cases Miss Hamilton's record shall be treated with all the leniency possible, and your own with a stricter severity."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Oliphant," said Patty,

impulsively grasping the principal's hand in both her own. "That is just what I want, and you have expressed it exactly right. Thank you very much. And of course—this is a confidential conversation?"

"Inviolably so," answered Miss Oliphant, and again the amused look came into her eyes.

Patty left the room, feeling that at last she had conquered. If Miss Oliphant did as she had promised—and Patty felt sure she would—Lorraine's record must stand the highest, and no one could ever guess that Patty had done anything toward bringing it about.

A day or two later Miss Oliphant received a visit from Lorraine.

Partly from the embarrassed attitude of her caller, and partly because Miss Oliphant's experience had taught her to put two and two together rather successfully, she intuitively felt that Lorraine had come on an errand similar to Patty's.

And this was the truth. But as Lorraine was of a less ingenuous nature than Patty, and had not as good reasons for confidence in the sympathy of her fellow-beings, she was much more embarrassed than Patty had been, and found it more difficult to make her requests known.

"Miss Oliphant," she said, "you know Patty Fairfield and I are very close in competition for the general prize; and I do hope she will get it. She deserves it far more than I do."

"Why?" said Miss Oliphant, with sudden directness.

"Because—because—oh, I don't know," stammered poor Lorraine; "because she's so splendid and so clever, and she always knows her lessons, and she writes such beautiful Themes, and—and I love her so!"

"Then I gather," said Miss Oliphant, "that you wish the general prize to be awarded to Miss Fairfield because of your affection for her, and not because she has justly won it."

"Oh no, Miss Oliphant, not that," said Lorraine, in genuine distress at her inability to make herself understood. "But don't you see, we're even now, and if you could just give me a few less marks, and Patty a few more, it would be all right, and I don't think that would be injustice, and then she'd have the prize."

Miss Oliphant looked decidedly amused now. The smile in her eyes even showed itself a little on her rarely-smiling lips.

"Your sentiments toward your friend do you great credit, Miss Hamilton," she said, "but

I cannot say that I entirely approve of the means you propose to use. Do you think it right to mark pupils incorrectly?"

"Oh no, not as a general thing, Miss Oliphant. But I thought you wouldn't mind just a little scanting of my record. No one need ever know."

"I can't promise exactly what you ask, Miss Hamilton; but I'm willing to say that in so far as it can be done within the most liberal interpretation of justice, it shall be."

"Thank you, Miss Oliphant; good-afternoon," and Lorraine slid away from the awe-inspiring presence, feeling as if she were being carried off wounded after a battle. But she couldn't help thinking that it had been a victorious battle, for Miss Oliphant's evident amusement seemed to imply an acquiescence in the plan.

The last day of the school term was nearly a week before Christmas. The closing exercises were of a somewhat elaborate nature and were held in the large assembly-room. The parents of the pupils were invited, and the audience was a large one.

Patty had told her father that she did not expect the general prize, but was confident that

Lorraine would get it. Mr. Fairfield had teased her for her lack of ambition in not winning it herself, but Patty had only smiled, and said she had never professed to be a prize scholar, as her talents lay in other directions.

Lorraine had told her mother that she had no expectation of taking the general prize, but strongly believed that Patty Fairfield would win it; and Mrs. Hamilton had responded that if Lorraine couldn't have it, she certainly hoped it would be given to Patty.

Grandma Elliott and Mrs. Hamilton attended the exercises at the school, and were almost as excited as the girls themselves over the question of the prize.

After the programme, which was not a long one, the prizes were awarded.

Various small honorariums were given for distinctive studies, and, as everybody had expected, Patty received the one for Themes, and Lorraine for Mathematics.

But the interest reached its height when Miss Oliphant took from the table a large and elaborately bound volume of poems, which, she announced, was the general prize to be awarded to the pupil who had the highest general average of marks in all departments.

"It gives me pleasure," she said, in her dignified way, "to bestow this upon Miss Hilda Henderson."

As Patty told her father afterwards, for a moment you could have heard a pin drop, and then most of the schoolgirls, especially the Grigs, broke into an irrepressible, though stifled, giggle.

"Miss Henderson," Miss Oliphant went on, "has by far the highest record, and has had for the past few weeks. The next highest records are held by Miss Fairfield and Miss Hamilton, but they are many points below that of Miss Henderson's, though all show good work."

As Miss Oliphant made these remarks she looked straight at Lorraine and Patty, and though her grave dignity was literally unsmiling, yet that same amused look was in her eyes, and both girls understood that their solicitude for each other's success had been entirely unnecessary.

At Miss Oliphant's further disclosures the Grigs became more and more impressed with the humorous side of the affair, and laughed until it was necessary to call them to order.

"Were you ever so surprised in all your

life?" cried Clementine, as they all met in the coat-room. "Hilda, you sly-boots, I believe you knew you were ahead all the time."

"Honestly, I didn't," avowed Hilda; "I had no idea where my record stood. Flossy said Patty and Lorraine were at the top, so I supposed they were."

"I see it all," said Patty; "Flossy overheard that Lorraine and I were even, and we just took it for granted that we were the highest. Nobody said we were. So much for being conceited."

Patty and Lorraine never intended to tell each other of their interviews with Miss Oliphant. But owing to the quizzical look on the principal's face when she made her remarks from the platform, the girls suspected each other.

"Had you said a word to Miss Oliphant about this affair?" said Patty to Lorraine, as they walked home.

"Had you?" retorted Lorraine.

"Come on, now," said Patty, "own up; what did you ask her to do?"

"Will you confess if I do?"

"Yes; now that it's all over, we may as well tell all there is to tell."

So the girls told each other of their interviews,

and compared notes regarding Miss Oliphant's attitude on those memorable occasions.

"And to think," exclaimed Patty, "she knew Hilda was 'way ahead of us all the time, and never told us! I don't wonder she was amused."

"Well," said Lorraine, "I'm glad there was one thing in the world that *could* amuse her. I never saw her come so near smiling before."

"Nor I," said Patty.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CINDERELLA PARTY

ON Christmas Eve Clementine was to give a party. It was to be of the kind known as a "Cinderella party," that is, the guests were to depart exactly at twelve o'clock.

With the exception of the hops at the seashore hotel, Patty had never been to a regular evening party, and she looked forward to the event with great delight.

Ruth Fleming had come down from Boston to spend Christmas week with Patty, so of course she, too, was invited to the party.

Ruth's visit had come about in this way: Patty had thought she would ask Marian to visit her on Christmas, but Aunt Alice had insisted that the Fairfields and Grandma Elliott should spend Christmas with them in Vernondale. Then Patty thought of asking Ethelyn St. Clair, but concluded that after all it would be nicer to have Ruth.

"For," said Patty, to her father, "Ethelyn has lots of good times, while Ruth leads an awfully hum-drum life. To be sure, she's a hum-drum girl, the very hum-drummiest one I ever saw. But that's all the more reason to chirk her up, and when I get her here I'll make her have fun, whether she wants to or not. Besides, I had Ethelyn and Bumble Barlow both to visit me last summer, and I've never had Ruth."

So Ruth came, and arrived only the day before Christmas. She reached The Wilberforce in the morning, and Patty was surprised to see how little change a year had made in the Boston girl. She was just the same mild, placid, unemotional child that she had been when Patty saw her last. Her peculiarly Puritan effect was still evident in her face, her manner and her dress. She wore a plain little frock of a dull brown, with a jacket and hat that were inconspicuously old-fashioned.

In her quiet way she seemed truly glad to see Patty again, and Patty, knowing Ruth's natural shyness, did all in her power to make her visitor feel at ease.

In this Grandma Elliott helped, for that dear old lady had a knack of rendering people com-

fortable; and, too, her heart immediately went out to the shy New England girl.

"There's to be a party to-night," said Patty, whose mind was full of this all-important subject; "it's at my friend Clementine Morse's; and we're both going, you and I. It's a Cinderella party, and papa's going to take us and come for us again at twelve o'clock. Won't it be fun?"

"But I can't go to a party," exclaimed Ruth, in dismay; "I haven't any party frock to wear."

"Oh pshaw, yes you have; your best dress is good enough, whatever it is. Where is it? Let's unpack your things and look at it."

But Patty was obliged to confess that Ruth had spoken truly. The girl's best dress was a blue cashmere, neat and well made, and trimmed with silk to match, but Patty knew that among the light and pretty evening dresses of the other girls it would look altogether out of place.

"It isn't just right, Ruth," she said frankly; "but we must fix you up somehow. Do you suppose you could wear one of my frocks? I've lots of 'em, though of course most of them are not as pretty as the one I'm going to wear myself to-night."

"Oh, Patty, of course I couldn't wear your dress. It wouldn't fit me at all; and besides I don't care to go to the party, truly I don't. Please let me stay at home with Mrs. Elliott, and you go without me. I'll be a great deal happier—honestly I will."

Patty looked at her guest with a comical smile. "Ruth," she said, "I invited you down here to have a good time; and you've got to have it, whether you want it or not. So don't tell me what you'd rather do, but just make up your mind that you'll do as I say."

Patty knew Ruth well enough to feel sure that this was the right way to talk to her. Once at the party, she thought Ruth would enjoy herself if she could only overcome her shyness; and Patty had already planned several ways to assist in this.

But first of all, the question of apparel must be settled. Patty had her own ideas on the subject, and after a conversation over the telephone with her father, who was down at his office, Patty announced to Grandma and Ruth that they would all go on a shopping expedition that very morning.

On the way, Patty informed Ruth that they were to buy her a new party frock, and that it

was to be a Christmas gift from Patty and her father.

Ruth protested, but Patty paid no heed whatever to her remonstrances, and when the bewildering array of pretty dresses was exhibited Ruth showed almost as much delighted excitement in the selection as Patty herself.

After much discussion and trying on and consultation with Grandma, they at last decided on a simple but very dainty frock of light blue Liberty silk. It had a lace yoke, and was trimmed here and there with bunches of tiny flowers of a slightly darker blue. The effect exactly suited Ruth's fair hair and grey eyes, and as the excitement of the occasion lent colour to her usually pale cheeks, Patty declared she was a perfect picture in that dress, and there was no use looking any further.

So it was ordered sent home at once, and then the shoppers selected gloves, slippers, hair-ribbons, and all the delightful little accessories of the costume.

Grandma Elliott added an exquisite fan as her Christmas gift to Ruth, and then the trio went home.

After luncheon Patty decreed that Ruth should take a nap, in order to be bright and

fresh for the evening; and as Ruth had found it was quite useless to try to combat Patty's will, she obediently went to her room.

Patty herself was so full of excitement she could not have slept if she had tried. She unpacked Ruth's things when they were sent home, and laid them out in order for the evening. She flew up to discuss matters with Lorraine, and then paid a flying visit to the Harts. She telephoned to Clementine and to Elise, and finally settled down to chat with Grandma about the coming festivity.

At last dinner was over, and it was time to dress for the great occasion.

Patty's own frock was all of white; a distracting affair of embroidered muslin and fluffy lace ruffles.

But far more than her own finery, Patty enjoyed dressing Ruth up in her new clothes.

"You look a perfect dream in that blue," cried Patty as she finished hooking up Ruth's dress, and whirled her around for inspection.

And indeed a transformation had been wrought.

Patty had curled Ruth's straight blonde hair, and had tied it with two big blue bows, made of ribbon about twice as wide as Ruth had ever

worn before. The new frock was most becoming, and Ruth saw her own self in the mirror with an amazed surprise. She had never thought of possessing the slightest claim to beauty, but she was obliged to admit that on this occasion she had certainly achieved it.

The truth was that Ruth's perfect complexion and classic features needed an appropriate setting, and this Patty had provided, with a most pleasing result.

Patty herself was delighted with her success. She exhibited Ruth to Mr. Fairfield quite as if she were a doll which she had dressed up for her own benefit. Even Mr. Fairfield was surprised at the change in the demure maiden, and congratulated both girls on their charming appearance.

Then away they went to the party.

Patty gave Ruth orders to the effect that she must, for at least that one evening, make her demeanour correspond to her appearance.

"If you're quiet as a mouse, and silent as a mummy, you won't have any fun at all," she declared; "you must talk and laugh and make yourself jolly, and forget that you're as shy and bashful as you can be."

"Don't scare the poor child out of her wits,"

said Mr. Fairfield, laughing at Patty's vehemence; "you'll make her more embarrassed than ever."

"Oh, no, I won't," said Patty; "Ruth's all right if you scold her hard enough beforehand."

Although Patty's method might not answer for some dispositions, it was successful in Ruth's case.

Partly because of Patty's instructions, and partly because the consciousness of her attractive appearance gave her confidence, Ruth seemed entirely to lay aside her shyness and fear of strangers.

She was demure—as she couldn't help being—but her painful self-consciousness almost disappeared, and she was bright, happy and responsive.

The young people liked her at once, and, aided by their warmhearted welcome, Ruth responded heartily, and chatted easily and gaily with them all.

It must be admitted that this state of affairs had been largely brought about by Patty's thoughtfulness. She had spoken to most of the girls, and had asked them to be especially cordial to Ruth and to try their best to put the

stranger at her ease. The girls had not only done this, but had given their brothers hints in the matter, and as a consequence Ruth did not lack partners for the dances or the games.

But notwithstanding her plans and her hopes, Patty was amazed to see how far Ruth exceeded all her anticipations. The girl was positively a belle. The admiration and attention she received was such a novel experience that it had the effect of exhilarating her. She smiled and dimpled, her eyes danced with enjoyment. Never forward, or unduly hilarious, she charmed everyone by her demure gaiety.

No one was more delighted than Patty at her friend's success, and she said to Kenneth:

"I'm so glad Ruth is having such a good time; and yet I'm so surprised, for I never saw her so gay and sparkling before."

"I'm surprised, too, said Kenneth," for from what you told me about her, I imagined her a prim little Puritan maiden."

"I didn't intend to misrepresent her," said Patty; "but it must be the influence of New York City that has changed her; she never was like that in Boston."

"I think it's your influence," said Kenneth,

"for you always make everybody happy that you have anything to do with."

"Oh, pshaw; I didn't do anything for her except to help her pick out that pretty blue frock and give her a good scolding on the way over here."

"She doesn't act as though she had been scolded."

"That's the result of the scolding. I ordered her to be gay and glad, and she knew she had to obey me. That's the way to manage a girl like Ruth."

Ruth's successful *debut* in no way detracted from Patty's popularity. She was always the centre of a merry group, and the boys flocked around her like bees around a blossom. She had more invitations to dance than she could possibly accept, and she enjoyed it all to the fullest extent of her fun-loving nature.

"I thought I'd never get a chance to speak to you," said Roger Farrington, as he led her away for a dance, "you always have such a crowd around you."

"Well, you can be part of the crowd," returned Patty, saucily.

"I don't want to be part; I want to be the whole crowd."

"You must have a large opinion of yourself, if you fancy yourself a whole crowd."

"Well, I never see you anywhere. When you come to see Elise I'm not at home, and when she goes to see you she won't take me with her. Mayn't I come by myself some day?"

"Miss Daggett isn't visiting me now," said Patty, roguishly.

"Well, Miss Fleming is," said Roger, teasing in return.

"Sure enough, and I do want to make it pleasant for her. We're all going to Vernondale for Christmas, but I'd be glad to have you call some afternoon next week. Ruth will stay until after New Year's Day."

I'll be delighted to come," said Roger, "and I'll bring you some plants for your farm."

They whirled away in the dance, and as Roger was a particularly good dancer, Patty enjoyed it immensely. Dancing was a favourite pastime with her, but she rarely had an opportunity to enjoy it, as Mr. Fairfield did not approve of dancing parties for schoolgirls; so as Patty did not attend a dancing class, her dances were limited to the impromptu ones the girls sometimes had in the gymnasium of the Oliphant school.

CHAPTER XXII

"IT"

AFTER several dances Mrs. Morse proposed that the young people should play a game of some sort.

Nobody seemed to know of any particular game to play, until Ruth volunteered to explain to them a new game that had recently made its appearance in Boston.

The game was called "It," and was great fun, Ruth said, if the players would agree to keep their temper.

All present willingly agreed to do this.

"It's really only difficult for one," explained Ruth; "the one who does the guessing must be guaranteed to possess a temper that is positively incapable of being ruffled under any provocation."

Although entirely unfamiliar with the details of Ruth's game, it suddenly occurred to Patty that here was an excellent chance to test the quality of Lorraine's reform in the matter of amiability. So she said:

"If you want someone good-natured to do your guessing, I propose Lorraine Hamilton."

Lorraine looked up suddenly, caught Patty's glance, and determined that she would prove herself worthy of the confidence Patty had shown in her.

"I'll do it," she said, "and I'll agree not to lose my temper, whatever your game may be."

"You'll be tempted to," said Ruth; "I warn you that 'It' is a most exasperating and provoking game."

"I'll risk it," said Lorraine; "what must I do first?"

"First, you must leave the room while I explain the game to the others," said Ruth; "go out in the hall, please, entirely out of hearing, and don't come back until we send for you."

"Very well," said Lorraine, gaily; "when you want me you'll find me sitting on the stairs, with my fingers in my ears."

"Now," said Ruth, after Lorraine had gone, "we must all sit round in a sort of an oblong circle."

"An 'oblong circle' is easily managed," said Clifford Morse, as he began to arrange chairs around the walls of the long parlour. The other boys helped him, and soon the whole

party were sitting in a continuous ring around the room.

"The game," went on Ruth, "is to have Lorraine guess, by asking questions, an object which we've all agreed upon. That part of the game is something like 'Twenty Questions,' but the difference is, that instead of taking a single object we each of us have in mind our *right-hand neighbour*. For instance, Patty's right-hand neighbour, as we sit, is Kenneth Harper, but his right-hand neighbour is Adelaide Hart. So you see, we must each answer Lorraine's questions truthfully, but in regard to the person who sits at our right-hand; and the answers will seem to her contradictory and confusing."

Patty was quick-witted enough to see at once that these conflicting answers would seem like ridiculing Lorraine's intelligence, and would certainly be provoking enough to make anyone angry. It was a severe test, but she privately determined that if Lorraine showed signs of irritation, she would explain the game at once, and not allow it to be played to a finish.

When everybody thoroughly understood the directions, Clifford went out, and escorted Lorraine back to the parlour.

Then Clifford resumed his seat, and Lorraine

was left sitting on a piano stool in the middle of the room, so that she might twirl about and face each one in turn.

"We have all agreed upon an object," said Ruth, "which we want you to guess. You may question us each in turn, and you may ask any questions you choose; if your questions can be answered by yes or no, we're obliged to answer them, but if not, we may do as we choose about it. Now suppose you begin with me, and then go right around toward the right."

"Wait a moment, Lorraine," said Patty; "before you start remember this: everything we tell you will be the exact truth, although it may not seem so."

"Very well," said Lorraine, "I'll begin with Ruth. Does It belong to the animal, vegetable, or mineral kingdom?"

"Animal," answered Ruth.

"How large is It?" asked Lorraine of Gertrude Lyons, who sat next to Ruth.

"Which way?" said Gertrude, laughing.

"Well, how long is It?"

"About two yards," replied Gertrude, mentally measuring the tall boy who sat on her right.

"What colour is It?" asked Lorraine next.

"Green," responded Dick Martin, with a side-long glance at the frock of the girl next to him.

"Is It all green?"

"No," said the girl in green, "it is mostly black." This of course was true, as her right-hand neighbour was a boy in black clothes.

Lorraine began to look puzzled. "It seems queer," she said, "that one of you should say it is all green, and another that it is mostly black. But I suppose one of you must be colour-blind."

They all laughed at this, and Lorraine went on: "Where did It come from?"

Lorraine asked this question of a boy who sat next to Margaret Lane, who was from Philadelphia.

"From Philadelphia," he replied.

"Is It Margaret Lane?" asked Lorraine of Margaret herself.

"No," she replied, laughing.

"Is It anything belonging to Margaret Lane?"

"No."

"Has It any connection whatever with Margaret Lane?"

"None that I know of."

"To whom does It belong?"

Lorraine asked this question of a girl who sat

next to a young cadet from West Point, so she replied: "To the United States."

"Is It in stripes?"

"Yes," replied the cadet, after glancing at the striped dress of the girl next to him.

"Then It's the flag!" exclaimed Lorraine, triumphantly.

But they all told her she had guessed wrong, and she good-naturedly went on with her queries.

"Has It anything to do with the army?"

"Nothing, except that It carries arms," said the waggish boy whom she asked.

"Is It a person?"

"Yes."

"Is the person in this room?"

"Yes."

"Is It a boy or girl?"

"A boy."

"What colour hair has It?"

"Flaxen," was the answer, as the boy she asked was seated next to a yellow-haired girl.

But Lorraine, having been told it was a boy, looked around the room for a flaxen-haired boy. There was only one present, so she announced triumphantly: "Then It is Ed Fisher!"

Again they told her she was wrong, and the

burst of laughter at her bewilderment would have greatly offended Lorraine had it not been for her determination to keep her temper.

"I'm glad you told me that you're all telling the truth," she said, "for I'm sure your stories don't agree. You said it was a boy, and had flaxen hair, and Ed Fisher is the only one here with yellow hair."

"Go on with your questions," said Patty.

"All right," said Lorraine, beginning where she had left off; "what colour eyes has It?"

"Black."

"Oh, then of course it isn't Ed Fisher! Now, Patty, I've come to you. Is It good-looking?"

Kenneth sat on Patty's right-hand, and with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes Patty replied, "Oh, not very."

They all laughed at this, and Lorraine, passing on to Kenneth, said; "Do *you* think It is good-looking?"

Here was a chance to tease Patty in return, for Adelaide sat on Kenneth's right hand, and the boy said: "Oh, *very* beautiful! Quite the best-looking person I know."

Then they all laughed again, and Lorraine grew more and more bewildered. "Is It good-natured?" she asked of Adelaide.

Editha sat next to her sister, and so Adelaide said: "No; It is often as cross as a bear."

"Then," said Lorraine to Editha, "is It myself?"

"No, indeed," replied Editha, "but It is one of your dearest friends."

Clementine sat next, and Lorraine asked her: "Does It go to the Oliphant school?"

"No, indeed!" said Clementine, for Roger Farrington was her right-hand neighbour; "It wouldn't be allowed there!"

"*Why* wouldn't It be allowed to go to the Oliphant school," demanded Lorraine of Roger.

"Why, It *does* go there," said Roger, glancing at Mary Sargent.

"Does It, Mary?" went on Lorraine.

"No," said Mary, positively; "I'm sorry to contradict Roger, but, as Clementine says, Miss Oliphant wouldn't let It come to our school."

"Which am I to believe?" said Lorraine then, to Clifford Morse; "you tell me, Clifford, does It go to our school?"

"Yes," said Clifford, earnestly, "It certainly does!"

"Well," said Lorraine in despair, "I'll have to give this thing up. I believe you're speak-

ing the truth, but there seems to be a whole lot of truths. However, I'll try once more. Is It a boy or a girl?"

"It's a girl," declared Hilda.

"What colour dress does It wear, Flossy?"

"Black," said Flossy, thinking of the boy next to her.

"Of course you're speaking the truth," said Lorraine, with a comical smile, "but there isn't a girl in the room with a black dress on. What's her dressed trimmed with, Ed?"

The boy looked at Maude Carleton, who sat next to him. Then he said: "It's dress is trimmed with a sort of feathery, fluffery, white, lacy ruching."

"Why, that's the trimming on Maude's dress," exclaimed Lorraine, "but her dress isn't black. Maude, *is* It *you?*"

"No," said Maude, positively.

"I give it up," said Lorraine; "I promised to keep my temper, and I have; I promised to believe you all told me the truth, and I do; but I didn't promise to guess your old It, and I can't do it; I give It up."

"You're a trump, Lorraine," cried Patty; "anybody else would have been as mad as hops long before this. Now we'll tell you."

So they explained the game to Lorraine, and she realised how they *had* each told her the truth, although it didn't seem so at the time. She was glad she had kept good-natured about it, though it had been more of an effort than anyone had realised.

Then other games were played, which were less of a tax on the young people's ingenuity, and after that supper was served.

Mrs. Morse well knew how to provide for young people, and she was quite prepared for the demands of their healthy appetites. Sandwiches and salad disappeared as if by magic; jellies, ices and cake followed, and were thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Patty and Ruth, with Lorraine, Hilda and the Hart girls, sat in a little group at one end of the dining-room; while the boys went on foraging expeditions, and returned laden with all sorts of good things.

"It's almost Christmas," said Clifford Morse; "what are you going to do to-morrow, Patty?"

"We're all going to Vernondale for a couple of days," said Patty, "and when we come back I want you all to come and see Ruth some afternoon."

"I'm going to Vernondale, too," said Ken-

neth; "my aunt has invited me to spend the day; in fact to stay as long as I choose. So if I may, I'll go on the *Fairfield Special* to-morrow morning."

"You may, if you'll be good," said Patty, "but Grandma doesn't like bad boys, and Ruth is afraid of them."

"I'll be so good," said Kenneth, "that Mrs. Elliott won't know me; and I'll promise not to scare Ruth once."

Then the clock struck twelve, and the Cinderella party was over. Everybody started for hats and wraps, and Patty found her father awaiting her.

"Well, Chickens," said Mr. Fairfield, as he bundled the two tired girls into the carriage, "did you have a good time?"

"Lovely!" exclaimed Patty; "I'd like to go to a party every night."

"So would I," said Ruth.

CHAPTER XXIII

CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS day was fair and cold. As Patty said at breakfast, it was in all respects a typical Christmas, except that there was no snow on the ground, and that she hadn't heard any bells, nor had any presents as yet.

But after breakfast the last condition was decidedly changed. Gifts began to pour in, and what with untying the parcels the messengers brought, and the other parcels, which had arrived before, but had been kept until now unopened, Patty and Ruth were as busy as bees.

All the girls had sent Christmas remembrances. There was a book from Clementine, and a carved bookrack from Elise. Hilda sent Patty an old-fashioned brass candlestick, and Lorraine, a most complicated sofa-pillow, which she had embroidered herself. Adelaide gave her a little gilt picture-frame, and the other schoolgirls sent many trinkets and trifles.

Nor were the boys negligent of Patty's pleasure.

Roger sent a great box of holly and flowers, and Clifford Morse sent a large box of candy. Other boys sent various Christmas cards, and greetings, and many of them remembered Ruth as well as Patty.

The New England girl was quite bewildered by the excitement of the morning, for they were to take the eleven-thirty train for Vernondale, and there was scarcely time to look at all the gifts before they started.

Patty tore open the parcels rapidly, one after another, exclaimed with delight at their contents, and finally scrabbled all the wrapping-paper into a big heap, and declared it was time to dress for their journey.

The Fairfields themselves were to take their gifts for each other to Vernondale, for in the evening there was to be a family Christmas tree at Aunt Alice's.

Patty had of course prepared gifts for all the Elliott family, as also had Grandma Elliott and Mr. Fairfield. These parcels, with some that were added by Ruth, filled two large suit-cases, and then there were left several bundles to be carried by hand.

When the party left The Wilberforce, with all this *impedimenta,* Patty said they looked as if they had been dispossessed.

At the ferry they met Kenneth, who was going to Vernondale on the same train. The boy, too, was laden with Christmas luggage, and merry greetings were exchanged.

"I've a gift here for each of you girls," said Kenneth, "but I can't find it now among all this trash. Mayn't I come over to Mrs. Elliott's this afternoon and bring them?"

"Not this afternoon," said Patty, "because all the Tea Club girls are coming to see me then, and we wouldn't have a boy around for anything. But come over this evening, when we have the Christmas tree; and ask Miss Daggett to come, too."

"Thank you, I'll ask her with pleasure; I'm afraid she won't come, she goes out so little, but I hope she will. However, even if she won't I'll run over for a few moments, anyway."

"Mr. Hepworth is coming this evening," went on Patty, "and he's going to bring my portrait for a Christmas present to me. He's been painting it, you know, and it's finished. I've never seen it at all, not even in the beginning;

but papa says it's a very good likeness. I'm crazy to see it."

"Why!" exclaimed Kenneth, "my Christmas gift for you is a portrait of yourself, also; and I'll wager anything you like that it looks more like you than the one Hepworth has done."

"A portrait of me!" exclaimed Patty, "why, *you* can't paint."

"I didn't say I painted it, and it isn't exactly painted anyway; but it's a portrait of you, and it looks more like you than anything Hepworth could possibly do."

"Then it must be a photograph! but why should you give me a photograph of myself? Is it in a frame?"

"Yes, a pretty little Florentine frame."

"Then the gift is really the frame; but I don't see why you put *my* photograph in it; and anyway I didn't know you had a picture of me. Pray, where did you get it?"

"I'll show it to Ruth," said Kenneth, "if you'll promise not to look; for I don't want you to see it until after you've expressed your opinion of Mr. Hepworth's portrait."

Kenneth unwrapped a parcel, and taking care not to let Patty see, Ruth looked at the contents.

"Oh," she said, "I don't think that looks like Patty!"

"Do you think it's prettier than she is?" asked Kenneth, smiling.

"No," replied Ruth, smiling, too; "I don't think it's half as pretty as Patty."

"Well," said Kenneth, "I don't like to differ with you, but do you know, I think Patty will say that it looks exactly like her, and that it doesn't flatter her a bit."

"I believe she will," said Ruth, and then they both laughed.

"You needn't think I'm curious," said Patty; "I can easily wait until evening to see a picture of myself. I shall take it out of the frame anyway, and put some other picture in."

When they reached Vernondale Kenneth went directly to his aunt's and the others went to Mrs. Elliott's.

The whole family rushed to the door to meet them, and there was a general hubbub of Christmas greetings.

The packages and bundles were whisked away by Frank into the parlour, whose doors were kept carefully closed until the time should come for the Christmas tree.

Marian took possession of Patty and held her by the hand as if afraid she would run away. "Oh, Patty," she kept saying, "I'm *so* glad to see you again. *Do* stay a long time, won't you?"

Ruth was by no means neglected, for the Elliotts were a large-hearted family, and dearly enjoyed giving pleasure to the stranger within their gates.

About half an hour after their arrival Mr. Fairfield looked at his watch, and declared that it was time for him to go down to the station to meet the Philadelphia train.

"Oh, is Nan coming?" exclaimed Patty, for this was a surprise to her.

"Well, I'll just go down to the station in case she *should* come," said Mr. Fairfield, smiling.

"Oh, Aunt Alice," cried Patty, "it was lovely of you to ask Nan! Now we'll have the whole family together."

Mr. Fairfield soon returned, bringing Nan, who looked more pretty and charming than ever, with a sprig of holly tucked among her furs.

Patty flew at her and welcomed her warmly, for she dearly loved Nan and had not seen her since the autumn.

"When are you coming to New York?" cried Patty, "and when—oh, *when* are you coming to live with us?"

"Mother and I are going to New York soon after the holidays," said Nan, "but I don't think I shall go to live with the Fairfields until about Easter time."

Then such a merry Christmas dinner as they had! Everybody talked and laughed so much they almost forgot to eat the array of good things Aunt Alice had provided.

"Do you remember our last family party?" asked Patty. "It was at Boxley Hall, last New Year's Day, and I sat at the head of the table."

"Yes," said Aunt Alice, "and a very graceful and capable little hostess you were."

"And next Christmas," said Mr. Fairfield, "the Fairfields will again entertain the Elliotts, and Mrs. Fairfield will preside at her own table."

Nan blushed and smiled, and seconded the invitation very prettily.

After dinner Marian carried Ruth and Patty off to her own room to await the coming of the Tea Club girls. Marian and Ruth seemed to

like each other at once, and when the other girls arrived they were also quite ready to make friends with the Boston visitor.

The Tea Club girls all brought little gifts to Patty, who had also prepared small Christmas remembrances for them.

The Tea Club had always been noted for its merry times, but to-day they fairly outdid themselves. Patty told them they were as merry as Grigs, and assured them that higher commendation was impossible.

Later, Nan joined the group, and as she was well known to the girls from her visit of the summer before, they were all delighted to see her again.

At six o'clock the Tea Club girls regretfully went home, all promising to call on Patty again early the next morning.

Then came the evening fun. Frank declared that there was not room for another parcel in the parlour. He said that the budget Nan brought was the last straw, and that when Mr. Hepworth and Kenneth arrived he hoped they'd have consideration enough not to bring any bundles.

But his hopes were in vain, for not only did the two come well laden, but Miss Daggett

accompanied her nephew, and she, too, had her hands full.

However, room was made somehow, and at last Frank threw open the parlour doors and invited them all to come in.

Although the tree, with its decorations and candles, was ostensibly for the little children, Edith and Gilbert, yet everybody shared in the enjoyment of it.

And everybody had so many presents that they scarcely had time to look at the others' gifts.

Mr. Fairfield gave Patty a dear little watch, and Nan gave her a chatelaine pin to wear with it. Marian gave her a ring, Ruth a book, and everybody present gave her some pretty token.

Kenneth announced that his gift for Patty was a portrait of herself, but he was not willing to exhibit it until after Mr. Hepworth's portrait had been shown, for he felt sure his was the better likeness.

Mr. Hepworth looked a little surprised at this, but good-naturedly said he was quite willing to have his work criticised, and he unveiled a portrait which stood on an easel.

It was a beautiful picture of Patty, and though perhaps a trifle idealised, it was truly a portrait

of the girl's nature, and showed a face beaming with happiness, yet with earnest eyes that betokened the dawning of a sweet and true womanhood.

Everybody was delighted with it. There could be no adverse criticism on such a beautiful piece of work.

While the others were exclaiming over its merits Patty expressed her thanks a little shyly to Mr. Hepworth.

"Thank you," she said, "for thinking that I look like that. I wish *I* might think so, and I hope I may some day possess all that the picture seems to attribute to me."

"You do, already," said Mr. Hepworth.

Then Kenneth announced that he would now show his portrait of Patty.

"I don't care," he said, "for the opinion of anybody except Patty herself. Indeed, when the rest of you look at it I'm quite prepared to hear you say it doesn't resemble her in the least. But I'm sure that Patty will say it is a perfect likeness."

With a flourish the boy threw off the wrapping-papers and handed Patty a flat box. Patty took from the box a gilt Florentine frame, and holding it so that the others could

see only the back, she gazed at the picture it contained and said:

"You are right, Kenneth, it is a perfect likeness! and I must confess it is a more exact portrait of me than Mr. Hepworth's, though his is far more beautiful."

Then Patty turned the frame around and showed that it contained no portrait at all, but a mirror!

How everybody laughed at Kenneth's joke, and Mr. Hepworth picked up the mirror, and, looking in it, said: "Well, if you think *that* looks like Miss Fairfield! why, my picture of her is a *much* better likeness!"

"I said nobody would agree with me, except Patty," replied Kenneth, "and I'm more than willing to admit the merits of your picture."

The rest of the evening was spent in merry games and fun, and even the little children were allowed to sit up until the close of the festivities.

Miss Daggett enjoyed herself thoroughly, and so did Ruth. As for the Elliotts and Fairfields, it is not necessary to say that they had a good time.

"I suppose you care more for Mr. Hepworth's gift than you do for mine," said Ken-

neth, as he and Patty stood looking at the portrait later in the evening.

"I don't know," said Patty.

"Of course, his is of far greater value in every way," went on Kenneth; "so if you did care more for mine, it would be because you cared more for me. Do you?"

"I don't know," said Patty.

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